

# THE ARGOSY.

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## ASHLEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

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### CHAPTER III.

ST. OUEST.

THE scenery around St. Ouest was charming, but the town was odious. Town indeed! it was nothing but a hamlet, with two hundred houses in it, and a gutter, a yard wide, running through the middle of its principal street, after the approved custom of French towns. St. Ouest lay in a remote valley, not far from the Eastern Pyrenees, which could be seen in the distance on a clear day, and to gain it from the high road you had to encounter a remarkably steep descent and a sharp turn, safe enough for the surefooted mules of the villagers, but less agreeable for the post-horses of travellers.

The hot day was over, one Thursday in August, and the inhabitants of St. Ouest sat outside their doors on either side the gutter, cooling themselves in the air and the scent before going to bed. The place could boast of a large and good inn, for the road above St. Ouest was one of traffic, and travellers were apt to turn off it to the village when they wanted rest, or to change their post-horses. The *Hôtel du Lion d'Or* stood at the entrance of the town, its host being the postmaster, as the sign over his large doors intimated: "Auguste Dusommerard, Maître de Poste aux Chevaux." Where Monsieur Auguste hid himself in the day-time nobody could tell; perhaps the cafés could; but the active, bustling conductor of the business was madame his wife. She saw to the housekeeping, she saw to the cooking, she saw to the servants, she saw to the guests, she saw to the marketing, she saw to the post-horses and she saw to everything. What would these lazy, incapable Frenchmen do without their active, clever wives?

Madame Dusommerard, like the rest of St. Ouest, sat on the bench in front of her hotel. She was a slim, active woman, with a clear complexion and quick dark eyes. Three of her maids sat on the same bench, but at its lower end, while the garçon Zan (as they had

corrupted his name Jean) rested himself in the porte cochère, half sitting on the low post which leaned against its corner. Meanwhile the night drew on, and the cafés began to empty themselves. Monsieur Dusommerard might then have been seen sauntering towards home, in his shirt sleeves, and wiping his brow with one of the wristbands, for it was always hot in the cafés, especially the Café du Soleil, which he patronised.

"Madame! madame!" suddenly screamed forth one of the maids on the bench, "we are going to have travellers to-night. I hear the sound."

"Bah!" responded madame. "Who is likely to come so late as this? Your ears are too fine, Célestine."

Célestine had a remarkably quick ear, and sometimes presumed upon it, but she knew she was right now. "They have turned off the road, and are coming down," she said. "Two carriages there must be, for I hear a double set of horses—three or four to each carriage."

Madame bent her ear. "It is so," she exclaimed. "Look alive, my girls. Zan, get out of the porte cochère."

"St. Marie!" was Mr. Zan's reply, as he stolidly kept his place on the post; "what's the matter with them, that they are advancing at such a mad rate?"

Madame rose, and stood in consternation; the frightened women-servants did the same; whilst Zan abandoned his post, ran a few steps to the left, turned up by the side of the house, and gained the vineyard, whence he had a view of the descent and was out of harm's way. Never had they yet heard horses come down that hill at a more fearful pace.

Zan folded his arms and did nothing: an Englishman would have rushed forward, at the risk of danger to himself, in the hope of averting it for the travellers. Not so Zan: he only looked on, and waited for consequences. Two carriages were descending the hill, the postilions of the first, who had lost all command of their horses, were shouting and screaming as only Frenchmen can scream. On, on tore the cattle: safely till they came to the sharp turning near to the Lion d'Or; but then—horses, carriage and men were down, a frightful, frightened mass.

Zan condescended to advance then: mine host was soon with him, and half St. Ouest at mine host's heels. The postilions were drawn out first: one of them, though bruised and battered, shook himself and staggered back to afford what help he could: the other was dead. The horses were next secured from doing further mischief, and then the carriage could be got at. It contained a gentleman and lady. The former, who was getting in years, had his head and face covered with blood, cut by the glass. They brought him out, M. Auguste and another supporting him. He did not seem much injured, but confused and partially stunned.

"For the love of Heaven!" he said, "get a doctor. A doctor. Does anybody understand me? Does anybody speak English?"

"Oui, oui, monsieur," answered the landlady, "I do comprendre—I spak the Angleesh. Zan, vite! cherchez Monsieur le Médecin. You no be afraid, monsieur; you no too much blessé. Docteur soon ici." Madame had entertained many English travellers in her time, and had picked up her stock of English from them.

"Oh, I am all right," he answered, almost contemptuously. "It is the lady."

They were removing her from the carriage, totally insensible. A lady under thirty, dark in complexion, but very handsome. The ready wit of the landlady suggested a mattress, and one was brought in no time. They laid her on it, and carried her to the hotel.

"Are we to stop here for ever?" screamed a female voice, in native French, from the other carriage, which had been brought to a standstill, and the horses' heads turned against the bank, while the postboys had gone on to the scene of accident. "Just come and open this door, some of you gaping mob: I can't do it from the inside. Do you think we don't want to reach miladi and see what damage is done?"

The door was speedily opened, and, scolding and talking, the damsel descended from it. She was a French lady's maid. Behind her came also a coloured woman, holding in her arms a rosy sleeping child of four years, fair as alabaster, with long flaxen curls.

"Est-elle blessée? est-elle tuée?" demanded Mademoiselle Barbarie, as she approached her master, too much flurried to be ceremonious.

"I don't know what she is," he replied: and, it may be observed, that though he had never brought his tongue to utter half a word in French, he could partially make it out, when spoken by others. "Ask if the doctor will be long, Barbarie; if he lives far off."

The doctor lived in the centre of the village, next door to the chemist's shop, and right over the savoury gutter, which was there at its widest. A long and eager queue (madame so phrased it) had flown to fetch him, and in a few minutes he was in the lady's chamber.

Little intermission had he in his visits there for the next thirty hours; indeed, he scarcely left it. The accident had not seriously injured her, unless—here was the danger—after-consequences should ensue. The whole house, doctor included, addressed the travellers as milor and miladi. They were of the English nation, and rich, and that was quite sufficient.

"Milor," on the Friday was tolerably well, with the exception of the diachylon plaster on his head and face. He saw no reason why he should not have some dinner, so he ordered it, and walked about the sitting-room (which contained his bed in one corner), considerably chafed and restive until it should be ready. He had never felt so

"bored" in his life. Unable to show himself in the street, for he was conscious that with those plasters he looked very like a Guy Fawkes : not choosing to appear even in the "salle," with its everlasting eating-table, never unlaid, and the staring Zan ; excluded from his wife's chamber, and confined to this narrow one of his own, with its sanded floor, he thought the day never would pass. He asked for some books : they brought him four, all French, and useless to him : he asked for his sweet little daughter, Blanche, but she had been taken out for a walk : he had recourse to the window, but nothing was to be seen but a closed-up house opposite, and the fag-end of the gutter. "Purgatory" (a word he had just made out in the French books) "could not be worse than this!" ejaculated milor.

It struck four, and Célestine and the landlady came in to lay the cloth for his dinner. He could have embraced them both. At the same moment, a sound arose from the street, as of solemn chanting, and madame and Célestine sped to the window. Milor peeped also from behind the calico curtain.

"What's going on?" he asked.

It was a Roman Catholic funeral, winding along towards the cemetery. A number of persons followed it, chiefly of the poorer class.

"Pauvre Etienne!" cried the landlady, her ready tears falling. "To think that this time yesterday he was as well as we are."

"Why, you never mean to say that whoever is in that coffin was alive last night?" exclaimed the Englishman, catching the sense of her words.

"It is the custom with us to bury them the day after death," explained madame. "This is a hot climate, milor. And indeed, the same day, if they die early in the morning, and we can get the preparations ready."

"Sharp work. I should think some get interred alive. I suppose those little boys, walking nearest, are sons of the dead. What did he die of?"

The landlady uttered an exclamation of astonishment. "But is it possible that milor does not know that it is the funeral of the poor postilion who drove him last night?"

He felt greatly shocked, almost to tremor, and sat down on a chair. He had known the poor fellow was killed, but thus to see his body borne past to the grave brought the horror more palpably home to him.

"It is just as if it was to be Etienne Baux, and none but he!" exclaimed the landlady. "When I ordered post-horses out for that travelling-carriage yesterday morning, I ordered lame Jaco out with them ; then I found that lame Jaco was down with the fever, and had never come at all that day to his work. So I called out that Louis the paresseux should go. With that, up comes poor Etienne and said he would go, if I pleased, for that Louis the paresseux wanted to

wait and drive the mail, to see his brother, who was dying in the next town.—That nasty fever, milor, has played real work with us this year, all throughout the department.—So poor Etienne went with the horses, stopped there for the day, and was driving them back in your carriage at night. Ah me ! ”

“ Does he leave many children ? ” was the grave inquiry.

“ A whole troop of them. Five or six—is it not, Célestine ? And another on the road, more’s the pity ! ”

The procession had wound itself out of sight, up the hill, and Madame and Célestine whisked out of the room again. It was the former who brought in the soup.

What did milor think ? The doctor had been in miladi’s room since one o’clock, eating nothing, suppose she asked him down to take a plate of soup ?

“ Yes, of course,” was the ready answer. “ Not soup”—with a rueful glance at the watery contents of the tureen—“ something better ; meat and wine.”

The doctor came ; and swallowed down the contents of a soup-plate, standing. It was *bonne, excellente*, he said, better than meat, which he had no time for, and as to wine—no, no. He had need that day of a steady hand and cool head. All was going on well, he added, but it had been a critical accident for miladi. And ever since she came to her senses she had given way to such excitement ; was so anxious that the child should be a boy, that it should be born alive.

“ We have no heir,” explained the Englishman, through the landlady. “ A girl cannot inherit.” The surgeon shrugged his shoulders. Living under the equalised codes of France, our laws of heirship were about as easy for him to understand as those of the ancient Medes and Persians.

By the help of some good claret, of which he was compelled to drink sparingly lest his head should inflame, the forlorn guest got through the rest of the day. On the following one he determined to go out, plasters or no plasters. Another day of *ennui*, like the preceding one, would “ do him up.” All was sufficiently well in his wife’s chamber, and when the black nurse dressed little Blanche that morning, she told her she had a new brother. So by dint of pulling his hat low on his brow, and tying a black silk handkerchief up the sides of his face, he partially hid the damages, and sallied out.

His first steps were naturally directed to the scene of the accident, and here, as he strolled slowly up the hill, after contemplating it, he found that the upset had shaken him more than he thought, for he felt fatigued and dizzy, and down he sat on the roadside bank. Closing his eyes, he only opened them at the sound of footsteps.

A traveller was descending the hill, a sunburnt man about his own age, who held a stout stick in one hand and his straw hat in the other, whilst a small valise was swung round his shoulders. He was about to pass the invalid, when the latter rose up in haste.

"Surely," he exclaimed, "it must be Major Hayne! It *is* you, Philip."

"And who the deuce—why, bless my heart and mind, if I don't believe it is Henry Ashley! Is it you, or your spirit?"

"It was pretty near being my spirit, the day before yesterday," was Sir Henry Ashley's reply, as he grasped the traveller's hand. "How singular that we should meet here!"

"Singular! I do not believe it is real. I was dreaming of you last night, and have been thinking of you to-day, half resolving that my next move should be to England, to pay you a visit at Ashley. And here, as I descend this hill, hundreds of miles away from it, and wonder what the old beggar I see on its side has been up to with his face and head, he turns out to be Hal Ashley! What have you been doing to yourself?"

"If I were not a family man, I should make a vow never to travel again but as you do—on foot," replied Sir Henry. "As we were coming down this hill, on Thursday evening, my carriage was overturned—there, a little below; and the final results are still uncertain."

"An awkward bit of road," remarked the Major, scanning it with his keen eye.

"Awkward! I never saw such a nasty hill. I wish I had those whose place it is to alter it under my magisterial thumb at Ashley. It is a disgrace to any civilised land; but they are not civilised in this wretched France. One of the postboys was killed, the other injured, you see the figure I cut, and my wife has been driven into premature illness."

"How long have you been abroad?" inquired Major Hayne, as he sat down on the bank. "I was not aware you had left England."

"Twelve months. We went to Paris first, and since then have been about, I can hardly tell you where. Right royally glad was I to turn towards Old England again. We intended being back there for Lady Ashley's confinement."

"You don't like the Continent?"

"I hate and despise it. I should never have consented to come, but that Lady Ashley's state required change. We lost our eldest child in a most unfortunate manner—the little fellow whose christening we were celebrating the day you came to Ashley, some years ago. It was a lamentable accident, and arose partly through my carelessness. Lady Ashley went nearly out of her mind: indeed, I do think that for a time she was positively insane, and the medical men ordered a complete change of scene. So we came abroad."

"Has it been of service to her?"

"Oh yes; she had grown quite well. And now this appalling accident! And for it to have occurred in this wretched village, which, so far as I can see, has neither comforts nor conveniences! Nothing to be bought for money. I believe they have been obliged to dress

the infant in Blanche's things. And, to make it more inconvenient altogether, I caught my man-servant out, a fortnight ago, in such barefaced pilfering, that I discharged him, and determined not to get another, as we were returning home. These foreign servants are all rogues."

"Who is Blanche?" demanded Major Hayne.

"My little girl. Suppose we go and see her," he added, rising. "The loveliest child, Philip!"

"Got the Ashley curls?"

"Ay. The poor boy was like his mother, but Blanche is an Ashley all over."

Major Hayne gave Sir Harry his arm, and they proceeded to the inn. The landlady met them at the entrance.

Had milor been to register the infant at the *mairie*?

Not he. "Milor" knew nothing about the registering or the *mairie*. What did she mean?

Then he must go to the *mairie* without delay. A child born in France was compelled to be registered at the *mairie* within a few hours of its birth, and Monsieur le Commissaire had just looked in to say it must be adhered to in this instance, although the infant was a foreigner and a heretic: otherwise they should all be brought up before the court to answer for their negligence. Milor must go at once.

"How can I go amongst the people this object?" uttered Sir Harry.

Oh, that was nothing, madame answered. Everybody knew of the accident, and would only sympathise with the patches of plaster. Her husband was waiting to accompany milor, in the capacity of witness, and had his best coat on, in readiness.

So Sir Harry, growling, went with Major Hayne and the landlord to the *mairie*. The officiating Frenchman, whose face could not be seen for hair, sat, pen in hand, ready to inscribe the child. "Quel nom?" he demanded.

"He asks what name," interpreted Major Hayne, who had picked up a sort of language in his travels which did for French. "What is it to be?"

"Name!" uttered the discomfited Sir Harry. "Lady Ashley likes to fix on the children's names herself, and she is too ill to be spoken to. It cannot be necessary to name it now."

"Quite indispensable, he says," cried Major Hayne, after a parley. "Impossible to register it without, he's saying. Just hark how he jabbers at us!"

"What absurdities the laws of France are!" exclaimed Sir Harry wrathfully. "Indispensable, indeed! and the infant but a few hours old! Why don't they insist on naming a child before it is born?"

"The name is not of much consequence," responded the Major. "Give him your own."

"No. Lady Ashley said, one day, she disliked mine."

"Give him mine, then. Philip."

"That's as good as any other, in the uncertainty," mused Sir Harry. "Tell him 'Philip.' Stay—add 'Ryle.' 'Philip Ryle.'"

Another colloquy ensued, puzzling to both sides. Sir Harry flew into a rage at the Frenchman's stupidity in spelling English names, and at length Major Hayne wrote them down in large letters, and the man copied them into the register. "Philip Ryle, fils de Henri Ashley, rentier, et de Lauretta Carnagie."

MISFORTUNES never come alone, so the old saying runs. St. Ouest was liable to be visited, towards the fall of the year, by a low fever, half aguish, half typhoid. Had our commissioners of health gone there, they might probably have assigned its cause to that sanitary gutter, which, with a few more, equally sweet, ended in a pool of stagnant water and malaria. The inhabitants thought nothing of the gutters or the fever : they had been bred up in their midst. Now it is well known that a person going fresh into a locality where a disease reigns is particularly liable to be attacked, and this may have been the case with Sir Harry Ashley. Certain it is, that, before he had been a week at St. Ouest, he was down with the fever.

It was a struggle between life and death. And when the positive danger from the disease was over, there appeared to be quite as much danger from the state of weakness to which he was reduced. It may not have been the reader's fortune to witness, personally, the effects of this fever, common to many a French town. It has been mine : and I can truly say that there is no weakness, no prostration, worse than that entailed by this disorder.

What the baronet would have done without Major Hayne, it is impossible to say. Probably have died. The Major was his constant and patient nurse, his cheering companion. He watched the moment for administering his strengthening medicines and nourishment, he was ever at hand with a cheerful word to rally his drooping spirits. Sir Harry feebly expressed his regret that the Major should be subjected to so wearisome a task, urging him to leave him to his fate, and to seek relief in continuing his travels. Wearisome ! the Major replied : he should never care, so far as he himself was concerned, to be jollier than he was now. He had been long without a reminder of old times in India, and this was one : he had brought many a chum, there, through worse illness than this ! All sorts of expedients the Major resorted to to amuse the invalid. Blanche was repeatedly called into requisition, for he thought that if anything could arouse Sir Harry from his dreamy state of weakness, it must be the sight of his children. The Major condescended to turn nurse, and would hold the infant, Blanche's new brother, on his knee, and exhibit its swarthy face to Sir Harry. The fact was, Major Hayne began to fear that unless Sir Harry would make an effort of his own accord to rally, they should

be obliged to leave him in the cemetery of St. Ouest. The Major was afraid of touching the baby at first, but he got used to it. It was curiously small, and bore a striking resemblance to its mother in its very dark complexion, piercing black eyes, which already had her keen expression, and promises of jet-black hair. When it grew to be five or six weeks old, the Major would pretend to play at bo-peep with it. Anything to excite a languid look or smile from the invalid.

The medical men—for in addition to the village doctor one had been called in from a distant town—at length pronounced that Sir Harry's best chance of recovery would be change of air. Sir Harry had thought so from the first, for the very place, he declared, was pestilential, and “the smells stifled him.” Major Hayne eagerly seized on the notion, and undertook to consult with Lady Ashley.

That lady had not left her chamber, though the child was then two months old, and consequently had not seen her husband during his illness. “An unfeeling shame,” muttered the Major to himself; “the woman is as capable of coming down a few stairs and across a corridor as I am; and if not, she might wrap herself up and be carried down. It's all Indian laziness.”

The Major was not far wrong. However, he entered Lady Ashley's chamber and told her why it was necessary that they should depart. Would she go?

Lady Ashley quite laughed at him. She might be well enough to think of it by about Christmas, not before.

“In the half of that time, ma'am, in the quarter of that time, we should have to put your husband underground, if he stopped here.”

“It is of no use talking, Major; it annoys me. I shall not think of stirring from here until I feel I am sufficiently strong to bear the journey without fatigue.”

The Major was sorely tempted to an explosion, but he coughed it down. A bright idea seized him. “As it may be essential to keep your husband alive, as well as yourself, what do you say to our going forward at once?” he asked; “you can follow at your leisure.”

“Thank you,” resentfully uttered Lady Ashley. “A generous proposition, that, to leave me alone in this horrid place.”

“You seem fond of it,” retorted the Major. “However, Lady Ashley, as it is a matter of life and death to Sir Harry, and his going or staying cannot seriously affect you, I shall take upon myself to act, and remove him.”

The Major was a resolute man. When once he deemed that he ought to do a thing, he did it, in spite of obstacles. Perhaps Lady Ashley found this out, for she afterwards acquiesced, with an ill grace, in the necessity for her husband's departure. It was arranged that Blanche should also leave. Sir Henry was anxious to convey the child beyond reach of that horrible fever; not that it was generally deemed infectious, but a sojourner at St. Ouest was never safe, and he desired to leave as little care behind for his wife as

possible. No sooner decided than done. Major Hayne made a bargain for a second-hand, nondescript sort of carriage, containing two compartments. In the coupé-front of this went Blanche and Mam'selle Barbarie; in the larger intérieur one of the seats was removed and a mattress laid down for the invalid, while the Major sat on the other. And thus they progressed by easy stages, very easy ones indeed, towards Paris.

"CIEL! quel malheur!" uttered Madame Dusommerard, entering Lady Ashley's room one gloomy day in November. "Has miladi heard the news?"

"What news?" apathetically responded miladi.

"That poor widow of Etienne Baux! She has never been strong since the child was born, and now she is gone. I sent Thérésine down with a little bowl of soup, and now she has brought it back and says the woman died an hour ago. The stupid thing, that Thérésine is! but she is a girl who never did have any head. As if she could not have given the broth to the poor children, instead of lugging it back here."

"Whoever will take care of the children?" exclaimed Lady Ashley, somewhat aroused. "There are several, are there not?"

"Who, indeed! It is a merciful thing, miladi, that there's a God to be a Father to the fatherless. Poor little creatures! It is not that they will be quite at a fault for means, for milor's liberality has prevented that, but who is to charge themselves with them and bring them up? Perhaps Mademoiselle Baux, the repasseuse, will; she is their only relation that I know of, and she is their father's sister."

"My lady," interrupted Nana, putting her black head inside the room, "nurse say little piccaninny not seem well—if my lady go see?"

There was no need of a second summons. Lady Ashley darted across the passage to the room occupied by her infant. The wet-nurse had it in her arms, its eyes were heavy and its face flushed.

"If it were older, I should say it was about its teeth," cried madame, who had followed.

"Send instantly for the doctor," interrupted Lady Ashley, putting herself into a state of great excitement. "Let him be brought without an instant's loss of time."

Madame went to give the necessary orders. When she returned, Lady Ashley was pacing the room as if she were walking for a wager, the child clasped in her arms. "But miladi is troubling herself more than there's occasion for," remonstrated the landlady.

"More than there's occasion for," reiterated Lady Ashley. "This child's life is of greater value than ours; better we all died together than he."

"Oh, miladi is pleased to joke," was madame's rejoinder. "A child's life is precious, nobody would say to the contrary, but it

cannot be put in comparison with that of a grown-up person—with miladi's own, let us say. A child is but a child."

"I tell you, upon this child's living depends more than you can form any idea of," retorted Lady Ashley, who was too much agitated to weigh her words. "He must live! he shall not die!"

The doctor was heard coming up the stairs, and madame opened the door in readiness. He looked at the child; he saw nothing particularly the matter with it.

"Is it attacked with the fever?" demanded Lady Ashley.

The fever, bah! The fever had left the town a month ago. He had told miladi so himself.

"Doctor," she impressively whispered in the strongest French she could command, and the words trembled on her lips, "the child *must* live. Keep him well, keep him in life, and I will reward you as you have never yet been rewarded."

The doctor looked at Lady Ashley and turned away with a raise of the shoulders. "If the child should be attacked with illness, I will do for him what lies in my skill," he observed, "but for life—that is not in mortal hands, miladi."

The doctor prescribed some medicine and went home again. He was descanting to his wife, "Les drôles de caractères qu'ils sont, ces Anglais!" when Zan burst into his room, in his untidy slippers down at heel, without the ceremony of knocking. Monsieur le Médecin must fly up to the hotel upon wings. The infant had gone into a convulsion, and miladi its mother was stark frantic.

Little rest that day had the worried doctor between the "frantic" mother and the sick child. It relapsed from one convolution into another, the last occurring about twelve o'clock at night. In that it died. It happened—it is wonderful to see and reflect how great emergencies are sure to be provided for!—that a Swiss Protestant minister halted for that evening at the hotel. The landlady suggested that he should baptise the infant: indeed, the whole arrondissement had been alive with the scandal of its having been delayed so long—"these careless heretics!"—and Lady Ashley, when convinced there was no hope of its life, consented. So poor little Philip Ryle was made a Christian to die.

Excited, unmanageable as Lady Ashley had been that whole day, with the child's death she relapsed into comparative calmness. But she would not be spoken to. The attendants suggested her retiring to rest: she waved them off, and paced restlessly from one room to another, muttering words between her closed teeth and gesticulating with her hands, as if she were debating some question with herself.

Morning came, and with it commenced the preparations for the child's funeral. It was to take place that evening. Lady Ashley indignantly protested against the haste, and the authorities were requested to allow it to be delayed. They refused: they said there were no grounds for granting the request, and nobody had ever

asked such a thing before. The Protestant minister had offered to remain to bury it ; and Monsieur le Curé, the local priest, with magnanimous generosity, allowed it to be laid just outside his cemetery ; not inside, lest it might contaminate the ashes of the departed Roman Catholics. Another funeral also took place the same afternoon—that of the widow of the ill-fated Etienne Baux, the post-boy. The whole population of the place turned out to attend them through the rain : a few were attracted by sympathy to that of Madame Etienne, but the masses flocked to the other, curious to witness the ceremonies of the heretics over the burial of their dead.

Late in the evening, Madame Dusommerard was in her kitchen, scolding her maids, for the seven o'clock supper was not ready. It had been a noted day, what with the funeral from the house and the other one, and the girls had seized upon the opportunity for enjoying a gossip ; consequently their work suffered, and madame was holding forth in rather shrill tones. She was in the midst of a sentence, specially hurled at Mam'selle Thérésine, when, upon turning her head, who should she see, standing in the middle of the kitchen, but Lady Ashley, dressed to go out.

Madame's tongue and words dropped to the softness of butter in summer. What could she have the pleasure of doing for miladi ? To think that miladi should have condescended to come down there, amongst the casseroles !

"I want a guide," said Lady Ashley—"some one to go out with me. I wish to go and see those poor orphan children. Let one of the servants show me the way," she added.

"But miladi surely will never do such a thing to-night !" cried madame. "Everybody must appreciate miladi's benevolent thoughts, but she must consider her own comfort and health. It is pitch dark, and the rain pouring down still, as it has done all day. Miladi had better wait till morning."

Miladi chose to go then. So Célestine, in obedience to orders, threw on her ample olive-green cloth cloak and attended her.

"Is it far ?" inquired Lady Ashley, walking under the large, bright scarlet umbrella, which Célestine held.

"About six or seven minutes' walk," responded the girl. "We follow the gutter—would miladi please to take care of her long petticoats?—then turn to the right, then to the left, and miladi is at it."

They reached the place, Célestine piloting Lady Ashley up the stairs. The sister of Etienne Baux had entered, and taken possession of the room, the furniture and the children. Four children were asleep in the bed in the recess, two at the top of the bed, two at the foot, French fashion ; another slept in the bed in the room, and the infant, now a month old, Marie Baux held in her arms, feeding it with some broth from her own supper. Two gossips were seated near, having dropped in to bear her company.

"It is Miladi Anglaise," was Célestine's introduction to the astonished Demoiselle Baux. "She is come to see the poor little orphans, all through the dark and wet. Madame wanted her to put it off till daylight, but nothing would do but that she must come to-night. Quelle dame charitable! and her own infant only three hours buried!"

Lady Ashley cast a glance, and but a glance, towards the sleeping children, whilst the gossips said "Bon soir," and withdrew in all humility. Her ladyship's attention was riveted on the infant. "Is it healthy?" she inquired. "Is it likely to live? It seems a very large child."

"Alas, yes! poor unfortunate!" replied Mademoiselle Baux. "It would had been a mercy, miladi, had it pleased the Holy Virgin to remove it with its mother, but strong as it is, it's sure to live and grow. It is the strongest and heartiest of all the lot. But just reflect, miladi, what a task it is to fall on my hands!—I, who was beginning to think of getting married myself. I should not have cared so much for the others, although there are five of them; they can shift for themselves, and two or three will soon be able to do something; but it is this infant that's the tie. How I am to go out to my work, the saints only know; and I have my regular places. I can't leave it in bed, to be pitched out by the others; and I can't leave it on the floor, to be trampled on; and I can't dance myself home, three or four times a day, to feed it. Ah! it's a dreadful charge to fall on me, is this child!"

"I feel much compassion for the case," rejoined Lady Ashley, "and have come to see how I can help you. Suppose I were to take this infant and bring him up?"

The Demoiselle Baux could not understand. Miladi's French was somewhat obscure; but had such an offer been made in the most concise language, she would have thought she heard wrongly.

"I have no boy," repeated Lady Ashley: "my own dear little one is just buried in your cemetery. I will take this one, if you will, to supply its place."

Heavens! but Miladi Anglaise could never be serious! Such an offer to descend upon the poor miserable orphan Baux! Mademoiselle was bewildered with its greatness.

"Then you will give him to me?" said Lady Ashley.

"Oh, miladi! can it indeed be real? Mademoiselle Célestine, can it be that Miladi Anglaise is not playing the farce with me?" reiterated Marie Baux, in tears. "Miladi shall be prayed for every day for a year. Night and morning I'll go into the church, my own self, to supplicate the Virgin for her in a prayer. Such goodness is unbelievable."

"Then I am to have him?" repeated Lady Ashley, growing impatient.

"Oh, whenever miladi pleases. And we will all fall on our knees

in thanksgiving. It is nothing short of a miracle that has fallen on the infant."

The amazed Célestine crossed herself. She had stood, till now, with her mouth open. "Quelle bonté!" she murmured, "l'ange de charité qu'elle est!"

"I will take him now," said Lady Ashley.

"Now! late at night! in the merciless rain!" repeated Marie Baux.

"He will come to no harm. Célestine shall put him under her cloak. Neither cold nor rain can touch him there."

The infant, during the discussion, had fallen asleep. Mademoiselle Baux wrapped a shawl round him and handed him to Célestine. She stooped to kiss his cheek before the girl hid him in the ample folds of her olive cloak. "Miladi will be kind to him?" she whispered, looking with a supplicating expression at Lady Ashley.

"Kind to him!" repeated Lady Ashley. "The child shall be brought up as my own child. I promise it to you in the hearing of Heaven. What more would you have?"

"Oh, miladi is all goodness! we should be infidels to doubt her," answered the Demoiselle Baux. "And for the poor bits of caps and things he has, I will bring them to miladi at the hotel——"

"No!" imperiously interrupted Lady Ashley. "Give them to any child who has need of them: and you can come to-morrow morning and fetch away these he has on."

Lady Ashley and Célestine, the former condescending to carry the ponderous scarlet umbrella, had left the house and plunged into the mud outside it, when Mademoiselle Baux came after them in a flurry.

Miladi had forgotten to ask the child's name. It was Robert.

Considerably astonished was the Hotel, and all in it, when the new importation arrived. The praises of Miladi Anglaise were sounded from one end of it to the other. Such an instance of benevolence had never before been heard of. The nurse spoke up loudest of any, and seized the little child with signs of rapture. She spoke feelingly: ever since the other infant's death she had been crying her eyes out at the prospect of losing so good a place, and now she should retain it.

But another surprise was to fall upon the hotel: perhaps not so agreeable a one. Lady Ashley, that same night, summoned the landlady, and gave orders for their departure the following day. The place was now too melancholy for her to remain in, she said; madame might readily believe that—and her husband, Sir Henry, spoke anxiously in his letters for her return. He was already at their own home, Ashley.

Madame replied that she knew well St. Ouest must be *triste*, and though sorry to lose miladi, she could not of course urge her remaining. But she hoped they might see miladi again some time: perhaps next summer.

Lady Ashley could not say. It was very far from England. Madame might present the bill in the morning, and see to the post-horses. She should start in the middle of the day.

Nana, the West Indian servant, stood waiting to undress her lady that night, and it seemed she was to wait in vain. Certainly, Lady Ashley could bear an incredible deal of fatigue. The whole of the previous night she had paced the rooms in excitement, and this one, when it might be thought she would have been glad of rest and sleep, she was pacing them still. Nana was tired, if her mistress was not : it was close upon midnight : and as the monotonous footsteps of Lady Ashley sounded on her ear from the adjacent rooms sleep stole over her.

How long she slept she did not know, but her arm was suddenly and rudely shaken. She started up to see her mistress bending over her.

"Nana!" uttered Lady Ashley, with that resolute look on her dark face, and those pale compressed lips which the good, faithful woman disliked to see—"Nana, do you want to be flogged?"

"Ha! mercy, my lady! Nana only shut her eyes for she think one little minute, and sleep come, come, without her knowing it."

"Tush! sleep away if you like, when you are not wanted ; what do I care? It is many years since you were flogged——"

"Oh, many, many," interrupted the woman, beginning to tremble. "My lady, what poor Nana do?"

"Will you hear me, woman? I speak not of those old, light floggings in the West Indies and in Madras, but I ask if you would like to be flogged till you drop—till you die?"

What with the sudden waking, and the words, the woman trembled so violently that her teeth began to chatter ; but, from the force of habit, she gave a straightforward answer.

"No ; it would be dreadful so to be punished now. Why does my lady threaten it?"

"I threaten it only in case of your disobedience. You have seen that child I brought here to-night : it is to be mine. Do you understand? When we get home to England, it is to be the little child I lost. None know that he is dead : I have not written : they never will know it. And if ever you breathe a word of the truth—a word that this is not the child Sir Henry left here—you shall be scourged as I tell you."

The dark West Indian blood rushed into Lady Ashley's excited face, and her clenched hands shook as she held them threateningly at Nana. The latter spoke :

"My lady knows that Nana always obey her, always, always. Nana her own slave and her mother's slave before her. If my lady say Nana jump into that fire, Nana do it. My lady only tell Nana what to say, and Nana say it."

"It is well," returned Lady Ashley. "Remember."

"But nursee not a slave," suddenly exclaimed the woman, as an idea appeared to strike her: "how my lady make nursee say it was the same child?"

"That is my business," retorted Lady Ashley. "Yours is to mind what I have commanded you."

It was one o'clock the next day, about fourteen weeks from the period of her arrival at St. Ouest, that Lady Ashley quitted the hotel. Her black maid, the infant Robert Baux, and the nurse, who was a native of St. Ouest, accompanying her. She had been a profitable guest, one the hotel did not often meet with, and Monsieur Auguste Dusommerard, madame his wife, the three maids and Zan, all stood in the street to salute her, on the right and left of the porte cochère. Half the town had likewise congregated there to watch the departure, the Demoiselle Baux and the orphan children forming part of them, while murmurings of prayer for Miladi Anglaise the angel caught the ear. Lady Ashley gave a cold bow on either side, and the carriage moved up the hill. As it toiled past the cemetery the lady cast a passionate, regretful glance towards a spot of earth near it, and when it was no longer visible she flung herself back in her seat, and her eyes fell upon the infant opposite to her. If we may believe all tales, that little child is not the only one who has been palmed off for a real heir.

(*To be continued.*)

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## “HE COMETH NOT,” SHE SAID.

John is not come home !

The kine lie midst the sedges on the shore,  
Or moan and wander to the dairy door,  
Or restless o'er the dewy moorlands roam.

Not come home !

Such simple words, to mean so much to me,  
To keep me weeping, watching by the sea—  
The cruel sea, whose waves for ever foam.

So long ago, ah, me !

The length'ning shadows fell upon the beck  
And on the moorlands to the rocky neck  
Of Ulla, lying broken in the sea.

So long ago, that morn !

The sunrise made our home a golden home,  
The foam upon the sea-waves golden foam,  
The thorn tree on the hill a golden thorn.

So long ago, those hours !

“Methinks,” said John, “the world a golden world,  
And yon a golden ship with flags unfurl'd ;  
The flow'r's upon the moorlands golden flowers.”

So long ago, my love !

He took a leaf, and laid it in his breast,  
“Oh, golden leaf !” said he, and pointed to the West.  
Thence upward to the golden light above.

So long ago, the shock !

The sun had set, and o'er the shadowed lea,  
The wind with fury drove the foaming sea,  
And wrecked the vessels on the sunken rock.

John is not come home !

Yet often in the sunrise' golden shrine,  
Upon the purple moorlands lie the kine,  
Or towards the golden sea impatient roam.

Not come home ? you jest !

Oh, sea ! Give up thy dead ! Deep calls to deep ;  
Awake from slumber those who lie asleep !  
Whose smiling lips thy song has lulled to rest.

All shall sleep !

The tired and heavy-laden ones shall lie  
At rest ; and peace shall close the weary eye  
In sleep ; and spread her wings upon the deep.

Oh, John, I grow so old !

And shadows linger long upon the beck,  
And heavy gloom lies brooding o'er the wreck,  
And, phantom like, creeps farther o'er the wold.

John is not come home !

Then lay me gently on the shadow'd lea,  
That as I die mine eyes may watch the sea—  
The wind-tossed sea, whose spray breaks into foam.

He doeth all things well !

Have patience, tender heart ! The scourging's past,  
The suff'ring's cease, and joy will come at last.  
Oh, life and death, whose mysteries no tongue can tell !

ADA M. TROTTER.

## DIS ALITER VISUM.

July 30, 1700—January 14, 1892.

TILL the lamented death of the late Duke of Clarence and Avondale, English history has furnished, at least since the Conquest, but one instance of the decease of the heir apparent of the heir apparent to the Crown.

That instance was supplied by the death, July 30, 1700, of the Duke of Gloucester, the only surviving child of Princess, afterwards Queen, Anne.

It may also be mentioned as a remarkable incident that King William the Third, who then filled the throne, was the only example of an English sovereign who would not necessarily have been succeeded by his own posterity. For by Act of Parliament, Princess Anne was next in the succession and after her children.

There was every human probability that the young Duke of Gloucester, who was but eleven at the time of his death, would survive both William and Anne and rule the British Empire as King William the Fourth. But it was ordered otherwise. The life of this poor young duke was of immense political importance, for, as the adherents of the exiled monarch at St. Germain fully believed, his life was the chief, if not the only real, obstacle that existed to prevent the restoration of the Prince of Wales. Therefore every one who hated Popery and loved the Protestant religion and liberty earnestly prayed for the long life of the Duke of Gloucester. But their prayers were not answered.

How greatly changed are times!

When nearly two centuries ago the young royal Duke lay dying at Windsor, there were thousands of English men and English women of all ranks and degrees eagerly hoping that the next tidings would be of his decease.

What a contrast to yesterday when there was probably throughout the globe not one British heart that did not throb with sympathy for the royal household at Sandringham, and rise in prayer to the Almighty that He would avert the impending blow.

Another contrast that is worthy to be noted:

The Prince, whose loss the nation now so justly deplores, had in his short but fatal illness the best medical treatment that advanced science could give. It was far otherwise with the hapless Duke of Gloucester, who appears to have been simply sacrificed to the ignorance of his physicians. The boy's malady was scarlet fever, but he was treated first for quinsy and then for small pox. To this treatment he succumbed in three days.

His tutor, the celebrated Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, was present throughout the Duke's illness, and by the command of the

Princess Anne, wrote an account of its brief and terrible progress to the Archhishop of Canterbury, Dr. Tenison at that time, as first of the Lords Justices representing the King, then absent in Holland.

As we read the bishop's letter, the sad and melancholy scene rises before us as an actuality. They are taken from the originals, and both the grammar and the spelling are exactly reproduced. It may be premised that the Duke of Gloucester was born July 24, 1689.

“Windsor Castle, 27 July, 1700, 2 o’c.

“May it please your Grace,—

“This is by the Princesses orders to prevent all stories or misrepresentations. The Duke was a little ill the day after his birthday, which we imputed to the fatigue of that day. It went off, and he was pretty well, till last night that he was feaverish, his head ached, and he had a sore throat; so the Princesse sent for Dr. Hans, who fearing a Quinzy, has let him blood three hours agoe five or six ounces. Since that time his feaver is abated, no ill symptome of no sort appears, but the Doctor desires assistance, in case of accidents. Upon this Dr. Gibbons is sent for, only out of the caution that an affair of this consequence requires. This is the true state of this matter, which I am commanded to signify to your Grace that you may communicate it to any of their Excellencies.

“I am, &c.,

“G. SARUM.”

When Dr. Hans stuck his lancet into the poor boy, he let out his very life blood; and when presently afterwards Dr. Gibbons and his brethren made their appearance, and applied blisters to the royal patient, his doom was assured. Bishop Burnet thus reported the result.

“Windsor Castle, 29 July, 1700,

“10 in the morning.

“May it please your Grace,—

“The Doctors have been now with the Duke; they opened one of the blisters which rise very well. They are still of a mind in their prescriptions, but Dr. Ratcliffe is not yet satisfied whether it may not prove to be the small pox, at night he believes it will be plainer. They do all agree it is a malignant feaver, and that there is much danger in it. This is what I am ordered to lay before your Grace. God of his mercy hear our praiers, and give me cause by my next to send you a more comfortable account.

“I am &c.,

“G. SARUM.”

The end was now not far off, though the doctors did not think so. Nine hours after his last letter, the bishop wrote another.

" Windsor Castle, 29 July, 1700,  
" near seaven at night.

" May it please your Grace,—

" Things are no worse, but rather better. The Duke's head is more consistent, his breathing freer, and he sleeps a little more. Dr. Ratcliffe begins now to give over the apprehensions he had of the small pox. The Doctors do still agree in their Prescriptions. Upon opening the blisters for which I have staied the sending this—I had begun this period thinking as was intended that the blisters were to have been opened before this time, but his Highness is in a breathing sweat and sleeps so this is delaied. It is plainly a rash and there is no ill Simptome only as the Feaver is Malignant so the Patient is weak. This is what the Phisitians say who seem to own more hopes now than they did in the morning.

" I am, with all Respect, My Lord, Your Grace's most humble and most obedient Servant,

" GI. SARUM."

As may be supposed the end was not far distant, and a few hours terminated the boy's sufferings. The sad event was thus announced.

" Windsor Castle, 30th July, 1700,  
" 2 in the morning.

" My Lord,—

" God has now thought fit to put an end to this Prince's daies, and to all our hopes from him. At nine last night the Doctors applied two new blistering plaisters; the blisters of the former were fair and full, and everything seemed very promising, but before eleven there was a terrible change. The inflammation in his throat grew to that degree that it choked him. The Doctors ordered him to be cupped, and some ounces of blood were taken from him, but with no success, for he panted on till one o'clock this morning, and then, just as we ended the commendatory praier, he died. I can say nothing, and indeed think nothing, after this dismal sight. God be mercifull to a sinfull nation. I need not tell your Grace how much the Prince and Princesse are sunk with this. God of His mercy support them and Preserve the King.

" I am, &c.,  
" GI. SARUM."

It was the opinion of many that the death of the Duke of Gloucester was almost a direct Providential interposition. Young as he was, he had already manifested an extraordinarily military turn of mind. His toys, his amusements, his thoughts, all took this singular bias. He formed a troop of his young friends, placed himself at their head, and was never tired of exercising his boyish manœuvres with them. This tendency in after life might possibly have plunged the country into all the evils of constant warfare.

The same tendency was observable in the case of Prince Henry, the heir apparent of James I., who died at the age of 20. But in him it was allied to great intellectual attainments, and, in so young a man, singular wisdom and good judgment. Here again we have a contrast with the lamented Duke of Clarence, whose proclivities seem all to have been of an essentially peaceful and amiable nature, endearing him most to those who knew him best.

The Duke of Gloucester was sacrificed to the ignorance of his physicians, but the death of the Duke of Clarence can be ascribed to no such cause. Here we have to remain silent and submissive before the WISDOM that ordereth all things well, assured that even the chastening Hand of the Almighty must be fraught with blessing. We shall not always see through a glass darkly, and all that seems incomprehensible to us now we "shall know hereafter."



JANUARY 14, 1892.



WHAT can we say when cold Death steps between  
And severs two young lives in freshest bloom,  
One passing to the silence of the tomb,  
The other mourning all that might have been ?  
What can we say when grief is yet so keen?  
When orange blossoms change to cypress drear  
And bridal flowers, all tear-dewed, deck the bier  
O'er which she weeps—the chosen future Queen ?  
In grief like hers the tenderest words are vain.  
We can but look behind the clouds of Fate  
Where, shrouded now, still lies Hope's golden gate,  
Trusting the years to bring her calm again.  
But while slow Time is winnowing peace from pain,  
Enthroned within our hearts she still shall reign.

SYDNEY HODGES.

## A GUILTY SILENCE.

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### CHAPTER XI.

CHARLOTTE'S FIRST DISCOVERY.

CHARLOTTE HERNE was sitting alone in her own room, plying her crochet-needle busily. Although the Venetian blinds were so arranged that no ray of sunshine could penetrate into the room, Charlotte's sensitive orbs were further protected from the light by a narrow green shade, in shape not unlike the peak of a Zouave's cap, tied round her head with ribbon of the same colour. The day was hot and sunny, and through the half-open window one might smell the mignonette that grew in a box outside. Charlotte looked as cool, as neat, and as dainty as she always did, whether the day were hot or cold. Not a fold of her grey alpaca dress was out of place; not a single straggling hair could be seen among the elaborately-plaited coils at the back of her head; and her little white hands — and they were very little, even for a person of her diminutive stature—with their pinky palms and filbert nails, seemed as if they could not possibly belong to one who had been brought up amidst the drudgery of a farmhouse.

Presently, there was the sound of someone rapping with their knuckles outside the door. "Come in," said Charlotte; and the head of Sarah, the housemaid, appeared at the door.

"If you please, miss," said Sarah, "Mrs. Popplemead sends her compliments, and she would be happy to see you to tea this afternoon, if you can make it convenient to go. There will only be herself and her two nieces."

"I sha'n't go!" said Charlotte sharply and decisively. Then, finding that the girl did not stir, she rose suddenly from her seat, and stamping her foot, cried in a voice that was shrill with passion: "You have had your answer; why don't you leave the room? I tell you I shall not go! That's enough. Begone, and shut the door after you! I know them," continued Charlotte to herself, as she resumed her seat. "I have not forgotten their insolent patronage of poor blind me the last time I was at their house. They think that because they wear silk gowns, and strum on the piano, and jabber a little French and Italian, that they have a right to look down on every one who cannot do the same. Idiots! If I had not more brains than all three of them put together, I would drown myself to-morrow. Oh! to be pitied and patronised by such people because I am blind and helpless, and dare not defend myself with my tongue! If I were

to tell them what I think of them, Hugh would be sure to hear of it, and then he would be offended. They think that because I am blind, I must be stupid ; they think I cannot see through the game they are playing. But Hugh will never marry either of the Miss Popplemeads, try as they may to charm him. Namby-pamby dolls ! they were not born to mate with men like cousin Hugh."

Drawing from the bosom of her dress the little locket which Hugh had given her on her birthday, she kissed it twice passionately, and then went on composedly with her work. But a few minutes had passed, when the clock on the mantelpiece of Charlotte's room chimed the half-hour after two, and, following close upon it, came a second knock at the door. "It is you, little cat, is it ?" said Charlotte, as the door opened, and a girl of fourteen came into the room. "Again you are half an hour past your time."

"If you please, miss," said the girl, "my grandmother was so ill to-day that I couldn't come any earlier. I hope you'll kindly excuse me, miss."

"I don't care if you have fourteen hundred grandmothers ill," cried Charlotte, with one of her sudden, passionate bursts. "I'll have you here at the proper time, or else you shall suffer for it. Come here, little wretch !" The girl approached her timidly. "Take that ! and that !" cried Charlotte viciously ; and as she spoke, she pinched the girl sharply with thumb and finger in the fleshy part of both her arms.

The girl could not help giving utterance to a short, quick cry of pain, but took her revenge next moment, while rubbing the pinched parts with a wet finger-tip, by pulling a horrible face at Charlotte, and by muttering something under her breath, which even the blind girl's quick ears failed to catch.

"Crocodile !" hissed Charlotte. "Next time you fail to come at your proper time, I'll run a needle through your lip, and keep it there the whole afternoon. Remember ! Now get down Prescott's 'Conquest of Peru,' and go on reading from the point where you left off last."

Tib, with the volume in her hand, seated herself on a low stool close by Charlotte, but yet sufficiently removed from her to be out of reach of any sudden cuff or pinch which the blind girl might feel disposed to inflict. Charlotte having signified that she was ready, Tib began to read in a loud, firm voice, and with very fair emphasis and delivery, the strange story of the Peruvian Conquest, as told by the American historian. Charlotte was a silent and attentive listener. She had put her crochet-work away ; but as those restless fingers of hers must always be doing something, they were now toying negligently with a rosary of amber beads, which was one of the possessions that had come to her on her mother's death.

The girl Tib had been engaged by Hugh Randolph purposely to come and read to Charlotte, who had begun to grow fond of books

from the day that her misfortune shut her out from so many other of the world's pleasures. Charlotte cared but little for novels, and, with one exception, even less for poetry—that exception being a translation of the "Iliad," which Hugh had brought home one day, and in which she took intense delight, making Tib read many parts of it over and over again, till both of them could repeat whole passages of it by heart. Charlotte's favourite literature was history and biography, and nearly all her heroes were great soldiers. Especially did she love to have read to her the story of some great war, or some gigantic conquest; and the blind girl's sympathies were always given to the conquerors; the weak, the vanquished, the sufferers in any cause, whether just or unjust, met with scant pity from Charlotte Herne.

At the back of Dr. Randolph's house stretched a large, old-fashioned wilderness of a garden, which—with the exception of some half-dozen flower-beds, shut in by a thick screen of evergreens, on to which piece of trim seclusion the back windows of the drawing-room opened—met with scant cultivation at the hands of man. Such as it was, Charlotte loved to haunt its weed-grown alleys, and to sit in its tumble-down arbour, and listen to the droning of the bees among the honeysuckles and roses, and the merry twitter of birds in the neighbouring thickets.

Near the lower end of the garden stood two large oaks of antique growth. Pendant from two sturdy branches of these trees was a swing, which Hugh had caused to be fixed there for the behoof of Charlotte, and there, secure from all intrusive eyes, the blind girl would amuse herself for an hour or two every day, except when the weather was too bad to admit of out-door exercise. In shape this swing was something like a small hammock, being just large enough for diminutive Charlotte to coil herself up in, and was made of many-coloured Indian matting. The motive-power was supplied by Tib, who, by means of a supplementary cord fastened to the bottom of the swing, could regulate her mistress's flight through the air at will.

It was an amusement of which Charlotte was especially fond. "It's far nicer than being shut up within four walls," she would sometimes say to Tib. "Tie this gay shawl round my head and let me fancy myself the bride of some bold rover of the Spanish Main, awaiting my lord's return to his island home. You, Tib, are one of my slaves, and if you do not fulfil my behests, however capricious they may seem, I shall have your head chopped off and your body thrown to the sharks in the bay. A little higher, next time; so. That was glorious!" and Charlotte's pale cheeks would flush and her lips curve into one of those rare infantile smiles which lent at times such *naïve* sweetness to her face. Or, if she were in one of her darker moods and disinclined for talking, she would swing to and fro between the trees to the measured cadence of some quaint old rhyme chanted sleepily by Tib—some song of "true, true love and a broken heart," that seemed to lack both beginning and end.

"No more this afternoon, Tib," said Charlotte at last; and Tib brightened up as she stopped the swing and assisted Charlotte to alight.

"You may go home now," said Charlotte a few minutes later; "but see that you are here to a minute to-morrow, or it will be worse for you."

"Yes, Miss Charlotte."

"Let me see, did I pinch you to-day, or not?"

"Yes, miss; on both arms."

"Vile little monkey! if I had pinched you a hundred times, you would have deserved it all. But there's an extra sixpence for you. And now, begone."

Charlotte always paid Tib in sixpences for her pinches and slaps, and Tib, on her side, was quite satisfied with such a mode of settlement.

When Charlotte went downstairs to dinner, she found that Dr. Randolph had been sent for by a country patient, and was not expected home till a late hour, so she dined in a somewhat disconsolate mood alone; and as soon as the meal was over, she put on her hat and wandered out again into the garden. By this time it was growing dusk. Already the sun was lost to view behind the distant range of the Charnock Hills; the larger stars were coming out one by one, and soon the moon would begin to climb the eastern sky. Charlotte threaded her way deftly through the tortuous garden paths till she reached her favourite walk, a long, straight alley, shut in on both sides by thick walls of evergreens, and having a covered seat at one end.

Charlotte often walked here on fine evenings, for the twilight hour was grateful to her eyes; and not infrequently she would continue to pace the lonely alley till long after dark, meditating, castle-building, and talking to herself, till Hugh, cigar in mouth, would come out in search of her, and break up her reverie with a jest.

Hither came Charlotte this evening, for one of her restless moods was creeping over her, and at such times there was no peace for her within doors. Backwards and forwards, from end to end of the dim alley, the blind girl paced with measured, unhurrying footsteps, fingering her amber rosary and muttering strangely to herself.

"One, two, three. One, two, three. Seven's the mystic number, and the letters are always the same, read them which way you will. I must think about it. If I prick a cross in my pillow with seven pins, and gather seven sprigs of rue from seven different spots, and bury them in a hole with the knave of clubs, then, on the seventh night I shall have a dream, in which everything will be made clear. That was a strange dream I had last night! The same old witch-woman, with the toothless gums and the tangled, snake-like hair, that I have seen in my sleep before. But the box which held her ointment! all flashing with diamonds and rubies, and with an awful

Hebrew word engraved on the golden lid. And when I asked her the meaning of the word, she shuddered, and jabbered at me in an unknown tongue, and pointed with her skinny finger to a moon that was in eclipse—for I was not blind in my dream. And then she opened the box, and the smell of the ointment nearly took away my senses, it was so delicious, and yet so strong. And the witch-woman told me that if I would let her rub my eyes with the ointment, and would say a prayer backward after her, the gift of inner sight should be mine, and all Nature's mysteries and the hidden life of the world be made plain to me. So I let her rub my eyes with the ointment, and began to repeat the words after her, and had nearly got through the prayer when there came a flash of lightning that seemed to split the sky in twain ; and the witch-woman vanished with a shriek ; and as I fell sightless to the earth I heard an awful voice say, ‘Thou shalt be blind for evermore.’ Ah, what happiness it was to awake and find it nothing but a dream !”

Charlotte sighed and continued her walk in pensive silence for a little while. Then she spoke again.

“Blind for ever and ever ! To be a sightless ghost, wandering through all eternity in search of the Heavenly Gate, yet never able to find it ! What a terrible fate were that ! But why torment myself with this shadow of a dream ? I will think of it no more. Is not my lot hard enough already, that I must needs fret myself with the idle fancies of a disordered brain ? To know that never again in this world shall I see the sky, the stars, the flowers, or the face of him I love better than all ! That surely is a cross heavy enough for these shoulders to bear !”

She stopped in her walk and took off her hat and the shade that covered her eyes, and turned a passionate appealing face up to the evening sky, where daylight still lingered in tints of purple and saffron, and scroll-work of molten cloud. Her hands were clasped tightly, her bosom heaved, her lips moved, inarticulately at first, and then she spoke aloud.

“Oh, mother, mother !” she wailed. “My burden of darkness is greater than I can bear. Intercede for me with the All-Merciful. Ask Him to send His angel of death to your unhappy child. Let His fingers unseal mine eyes ; let me put off this earthly husk, and ——”

She ceased speaking. The colour fled her lips, the natural pallor of her face became intensified, her nostrils sharpened like those of a person at the point of death, and all the pulses of her being seemed to stand still in dread expectancy. A minute she stood thus, immovable, like a statue of death in life ; her eyes wide open, beautiful, straining upwards as though they held the power of reading the starry mysteries above. When she spoke, it was in a whisper that was a mixture of joy and terror. “Great heaven ! can it be true that my sight is coming back to me ?” she said. “A veil seems to have been drawn from before my eyes. My blindness is not the blindness

it was before. I can *see* nothing as yet ; I only know that this blessed summer twilight is lighter and brighter, and dawns upon my darkness like the breaking of a new day. It is—it must be true ! ”

And poor Charlotte sank upon her knees, and burst into a wild passion of sobs and tears.

When her overcharged heart had in some measure relieved itself, she got up and hurried into the house, and then upstairs into the seclusion of her own room.

“ Perhaps I am only deceiving myself,” she kept whispering under her breath. “ I must try, and try again before I can be sure.”

She had brought a candle and some matches upstairs with her, and she now proceeded to light the former, having first replaced the shade over her eyes. She next put the candle in the middle of the table, and sat down opposite to it ; and then, little by little, she removed her shade, so as not to let the full glare of the candle fall too suddenly on her delicate orbs, till, at length, she took it away entirely. Midway between her eyes and the candle she now interposed one of her hands, and fixing her darkened gaze intently on what to her was nothing but a dull, opaque object, without shape or outline, she proceeded to move it slowly backward and forward between herself and the light. This was an experiment which she had often tried before, and she was apparently satisfied with the result of it to-night.

After a few moments of the most anxious silence, she gave a great sigh of relief, and rose from her chair.

“ I was not deceived ! ” she exclaimed. “ My sight *is* coming back to me ! Now I want to live.”

She had already made up her mind that, for the present at least, she would not speak of her precious discovery to anyone. She would keep her own counsel for a little while. Some day, perhaps, she might be able to astonish Hugh by reading something to him aloud, or by pointing out someone in the street. And what a surprise that would be to him ! And perhaps—who could tell ?—when he found that she was no longer a helpless blind girl—a creature to be pitied with a sort of caressing pity that from any other person would have been intolerable, he might learn to look upon her in a different light—might even learn to love her ! Such deep, unchanging love as Charlotte felt for him must, surely, have in it some magnetic force, some occult power of attracting towards itself the object of its intense devotion. “ Only give me back my eyes, only make me like other people, and I will teach him to love me in a way that he cannot resist ! ” This was the happy thought in Charlotte’s mind as she dropped off to sleep.

She awoke just as the little clock on her mantelpiece chimed the half-hour past midnight. Even while she slept, the sense of some great happiness had been upon her ; and when she awoke and recalled to mind the scene in the garden, and recognized her happiness

as a blessed reality—for she would not suffer any doubt to cloud her mind—she felt far too excited and joyous to sleep again. Getting out of bed, she drew a red woollen shawl over her white night-dress, and tied the ends behind; and then taking off her net and allowing her hair to stream unconfined down her shoulders, and without any covering on her feet, she left the room.

Charlotte's rooms, as already stated, were on the top storey of the house; but above them was a large loft, used as a lumber-store, open to the rafters, and lighted by a couple of skylights, which wilderness Charlotte considered as also a portion of her domain.

Among other articles in the loft was a case containing a skeleton hung on wires, which had been placed there by Hugh, he having no room for it downstairs. Restless Charlotte, prying about one day, discovered this case, which Hugh had not failed to lock before leaving it. From that moment, till she had succeeded in picking the lock with a bit of bent wire, and ascertaining what was inside, Charlotte knew no peace of mind. The contents pleased her hugely. When she first discovered the skeleton, she sat down on the floor of the loft, and laughed aloud till she nearly brought on a fit of hysterics. The door of the case was now kept permanently open, while the skeleton, decorated with one of Charlotte's best nightcaps, and placed close to the door of the loft, stood like a grisly sentinel taking derisive note of all who entered.

Up the narrow staircase leading to this loft went Charlotte, with bare feet and streaming ashen-grey hair, with white night-dress and red waist-tied shawl. She never failed to greet the bony sentinel as she passed him. "Good evening, Captain Skull," she said with an elaborate curtsey. "Always at your post, like a good man and true. You must feel pleasantly cool, this very hot weather."

Through one of the two skylights in the roof of the loft, the moon shone brightly in, and spread a carpet of silver light across the middle of the floor, but left all the corners in deep shadow. Into the middle of this bright track Charlotte dragged a rickety chair from among the lumber piled up at one end of the loft, and sat down on it; for Charlotte loved to bask in moonlight, and her eyes were sensitive enough to tell her when she was in it, and when in shadow.

"Where are my wee, brown-coated friends to-night?" said Charlotte as she sat down. "Let me see whether they will obey my summons," and drawing her lips tightly over her teeth, and bringing the latter nearly together, she gave utterance to a low, peculiar, plaintive "week—week—week," like the cry of some small animal in distress, repeating the same several times at short intervals.

Soon, from out the dusky corners and dark hiding-places of the room, there came trooping into the moonlight quite a little army of mice. Timidly at first they came, with an advance guard of three or four that were bolder or hungrier than the rest, sniffing and prying about, and evidently suspecting the presence of some unseen enemy;

but growing more fearless as Charlotte's peculiar cry was still kept up, as though there was something in it which fascinated them against their will, or else had the power of making them oblivious of danger, and coming at last to cluster quite thickly round Charlotte's chair, fluttering and skimming about, moving blotches of blackness in the gracious moonlight.

Charlotte had not come unprepared for the part she had to play. From a bag which she had brought with her, she drew forth a handful of savoury scraps—grain, bread-crumbs, morsels of cheese, what not, all commingled, and rained them in a beneficent shower around. The startled mice disappeared in an instant at the movement of her hand, only to come scurrying back next minute, a mad, hungry troop, to fight and scuffle for the dainties spread so liberally before them.

"Little imps! how voracious they are!" said Charlotte, with a laugh. Her quick ears told her everything that was going forward. Two more liberal handfuls were scattered by Charlotte, and then she sat listening, with a pleased smile on her face, to the busy proceedings of the tiny animals around her.

"But where is my gentle Attila?" murmured Charlotte. "Where is the redoubtable chief of this sharp-toothed robber horde—of these tiny barbarians, who respect neither places nor persons, who know neither love nor gratitude, nor any law but their own hunger? They would eat me, who am their friend, if I were dead and they could get at me. Ugh!"

There was one mouse that was nearly twice the size of any of his fellows, a mouse that had parted with half his tail in some difficulty, and, as if in answer to Charlotte's appeal, he now scrambled up her night-dress, and began to peer greedily about her lap.

"Ah, ruffian, here thou art!" said Charlotte in a pleased voice, giving him to eat out of her hand. "What, still hungry! Here then, take thy fill and be happy! Wouldst thou, too, show thy gratitude by nibbling at poor Charlotte if she were dead? 'Tis thy nature, I suppose, not to know better. Playful little imp! I like thee, and yet I detest thee. I have half a mind to get a little amusement out of thee, by hanging thee on a miniature gallows which I have somewhere among the rubbish in my boxes. How wouldst thou like to dangle in the wind for half an hour? We would consult thy susceptibilities by making thy halter a silken one. But no, thou hast done nothing to deserve such a fate. Thou art one of the few creatures in this world who care a little for Charlotte Herne. All cupboard love, my dear Mr. Browncoat; the plated article, I am quite aware; but, as the times go, that is as much as one can reasonably expect."

Charlotte's pet having eaten its fill, began to frisk about her, climbing up her arms, and on to her shoulders, and finally nestling into a warm fold in her shawl, while Charlotte sat perfectly still, only expressing her satisfaction by an almost inaudible purr; the rest of

the mice, meanwhile, flitting round her chair, or chasing each other madly across the floor.

But sitting still was not one of Charlotte's virtues, and the effort soon wearied her. Drawing her favourite from the warm position he occupied in her shawl, she petted and caressed him for a little while.

"Thou must go now, little one," she said. "Thy company is pleasant, but slightly monotonous. If thou couldst only talk to me, only whisper me a little remark now and then, how nice that would be! Many a sly piece of family history must be known to thee; many a dark secret must be hived in thy tiny brain; and yet thou hast never a word! There, go; I have no patience with such dullards! Bon soir, messieurs et mesdames. Tchut, tchut! How the little wretches run!"

Charlotte rose from her chair, yawned, and stretched her arms. "What next?" she said. "Shall we say bed? or a little music? The latter, by all means. To-night I feel gay. 'My bosom's lord sits lightly on his throne.' What is that song which begins, 'I love to dance by moonlight?' It reminds me of something."

On a shelf in one corner of the loft was a musical-box of ancient construction, and possessed of a voice that age had rendered somewhat weak and piping. This old-fashioned instrument Charlotte now brought out of its retirement, and proceeded to wind up; and when that operation was completed, she placed it on her chair, and then put the chair just outside the square of moonlight on the floor. The box began to play an old-world set of quadrilles. Charlotte took up a position a short distance from the music, and bowed to an imaginary partner. Then, at the proper moment, she advanced with the skirts of her night-robe held daintily between thumb and finger, so as not to impede her movements, and her little bare feet glancing in the moonlight; and so, in keeping with the music, she danced one figure after another with her imaginary partner, in a stately and decorous style, till the set was completed. The small talk customary on such occasions was not pretermitted by Charlotte.

"Thanks, no. I have had one glass of wine already," she said; "and young ladies, you know, ought to be very abstemious. Now I call that downright flattery. My eyes are no more like violets than yours are like—well, I won't say what they are like, because I have not observed them sufficiently to know whether they are like anything or nothing—No, I am not cruel; only plain-spoken—Yes, I will give you a spray out of my bouquet, since you press so earnestly for one; only when you tell me you will keep it for ever, I know that you are quizzing me. I suppose you have told the same little fib to-night to half-a-dozen other young ladies. Such trifles don't require much invention, and when told with that little plaintive air, which becomes you so nicely, can hardly fail of success.—No, not cruel, as I told you before; only plain-spoken.—Yes, I am very fond of dancing, when I have an agreeable partner.—You can take

the latter half of the sentence as applying to yourself if you choose ; only mind which way it cuts.—Oh, I've no objection to dance with you again, provided you can find a vacant line on my card.—You cannot ? I thought not. For the present, then, good-bye."

"Heigho !" said Charlotte wearily, as the last tinkle of the box died away. "The music is over, and the moonlight is dying ; I think I had better go back to bed." She did not fail to greet the skeleton at the door as she passed out of the room. "Au revoir, captain," she said. "I suppose I shall find you here next time I come. Till then, adieu !"

She paused for a moment at the green-baize door which separated her rooms from the rest of the house. "Oh, my darling, my darling !" she cried plaintively. "May peaceful sleep and happy dreams be yours !"

## CHAPTER XII.

### CHARLOTTE'S SECOND DISCOVERY.

THE days immediately following Charlotte's discovery that her eyesight was coming back to her were the happiest that she had known for several years. To her the recovery of sight meant far more than was implied by the mere words. She had fully persuaded herself that it would be no very difficult task to win the heart of her cousin Hugh when once the barrier that seemed to shut out love and leave room for pity only to enter should be removed. She had daily and hourly proofs of his affection for her ; she had his own assertion that he was heart-whole and fancy-free, and she believed it. During the five years that he had practised in Helsingham he had walked unscathed beneath the fire of ladies' eyes ; what more natural, then, than that he should succumb at last to one of whom he was already so fond, and whose love for him was of no threadbare, makeshift pattern, but warp and woof of her inmost being ? Therefore it was that Charlotte watched with an intense, almost tragic, interest the slow breaking of that dawn which was to end the long night of her blindness.

And very slowly it did break. As yet, all that could be discerned of it were dim, doubtful glimmerings, only to be known from absolute darkness by being a shade less intense than that which had gone before. She was as one gazing into a fog that was brightening by imperceptible degrees, but through which, as yet, only the faintest outlines of any object were visible.

She kept her secret bravely, as she promised herself from the first that she would do, intending some day to surprise Hugh : and even Tib, who in most matters was as sharp as a needle, was in this one without suspicion.

Hugh did not fail to notice that of late Charlotte had seemed brighter and happier than he had ever known her to be since her

accident ; but he took no notice of the change to Charlotte herself. "Her regrets are dying out one by one," he said to himself, "and after a while she will learn to be content under her affliction."

But, besides Hugh's undoubted fondness for Charlotte, she possessed an interest for him from a professional point of view. She was for him a psychological study, the lights and shadows of which were abnormal and strangely mixed ; and, whenever he had an hour to spare for her company, he delighted in trying to disentangle the knot of her ever-varying changes of mood and feeling. But the riddle of her heart he never tried to read, and thereby missed finding the key to the vagaries of her brain.

One morning, on going upstairs after breakfast to her own room as usual, Charlotte discovered that the housemaid, after sweeping the carpet, had neglected to dust the furniture. On taking hold of a chair, her delicate sense of touch at once told her that the thin coating of dust had not been removed. Muttering something under her breath, she rang the bell violently.

The offending domestic was not long in making her appearance—a stout, country-built girl, with a face that was a curious mixture of cunning and stupidity. Charlotte turned on her like a little tigress.

"You have neglected to dust my room this morning," she said ; why ? "

She spoke with clenched fingers and set teeth, and there was something about Charlotte's passionate bursts which generally gave the idea that if at such a moment she held a dagger in her hand, she would spring upon the offender and annihilate him with a blow.

"I truly beg your pardon, miss," said the frightened housemaid, turning first red and then white, "but I quite forgot to dust your room ; and the housekeeper, she kep' me downstairs so busy that——"

"That will do," said Charlotte contemptuously. "You forgot ! You would forget your head if it were loose—not that it would matter much for any use you make of it. Get the room done immediately."

The servant disappeared to fetch her duster, for, in common with those of her class who had lived under Dr. Randolph's roof before her, she stood in great dread of Charlotte. There was something so weird and uncanny about the blind girl, something that seemed to remove her so far out of the category of ordinary sightless people ; she was so spiteful and unforgiving, and said such queer things about one, and was altogether such an uncomfortable sort of person to live under, that servants, who began by pitying her and then grew to dislike her, were not long in passing from that stage into one of superstitious awe, and ended by giving notice ignominiously and fleeing from a character they could so little comprehend.

Charlotte was pacing the room slowly, with a malicious smile on her set, colourless face, when the housemaid came back two minutes later.

"By the by, Jane," she said. "did I not promise you a week or two ago that I would get your fortune told for you?" There was something so honeyed and caressing in the way she now spoke, the change from the venomous passion that had barbed her words only a minute or two before was so sudden and complete that Jane's instincts, although they were none of the subtlest, whispered to her to beware.

"Yes, miss," she answered with a little hesitation; "you were kind enough to say that you would get my fortune told for me."

"Well, Jane, I have not forgotten to do what I promised," answered Charlotte. "I have seen the wise woman, and she has cast your nativity, and has found out a great many things about your future life."

"Lawks, miss! I hope they are all on 'em good," said Jane, pausing with the duster in her hand.

"Some of them good, and some of them bad, as falls to the lot of most of us in this world."

"Yes, miss. Oh, do please tell me more!" urged Jane, whose desire to read the future was quite equal to that of many persons much higher on the social ladder than herself.

"If I remember rightly, you told me that you were born at twenty minutes past two on the morning of the 8th of June, just twenty years ago!"

"Yes, miss, that was the time. My mother put it down in the old Bible at home."

"And you have a mole on your right shoulder and another on your left wrist?"

"Just so, miss; that's exactly what I told you."

"Well, I went to the wise woman, and told her all this," said Charlotte, "and gave her some money; and she told me to go back in three days, and she would have the horoscope ready. I went at the time she had named, and there she had it all ready written out for me. I don't suppose there's much truth in it, Jane, but I dare say you would like to know what the paper says?"

"Oh yes, miss, please tell me!" said Jane, on her knees and ceasing from her dusting, in her anxiety to hear the predictions of the "wise woman," in whose powers of vaticination she was a firm believer.

"The paper states, in the first place, that you are loved by a young man with black hair, and a slight squint in one of his eyes, who is a carpenter by trade."

"That's my Bill all over!" said the awe-struck Jane, in a subdued voice.

"The paper goes on to say that this young man has been courting you for three years and a half, and that you will be married in about two years from this time. It adds, further, that you had a valentine last February from another young man, and that the black-haired young man was very jealous and angry when you showed it to him."

"Oh, miss ! however did she learn all that ?" said Jane, with an uncomfortable tingling of the nerves. "It's all true, every bit ; and we are to be married in two years' time, if all goes well."

"She read it in the stars, I suppose," said crafty Charlotte. "How else could she know so many circumstances of your life?"

The fact was, that Charlotte had heard all these particulars from Tib, who often spent a spare hour, when her mistress did not want her, in the kitchen ; and who had there heard Jane, in her confidential moments, discussing her love affairs with the other servants.

"Yes, you are to be married in two years," resumed Charlotte ; "and—but I won't distress you by telling you what comes next. You are happy now ; why should I make you miserable ?"

"Oh, miss ! you must please tell me, whether it's good or bad," pleaded Jane earnestly. "If it's bad news, I'll try to bear it ; but to keep it from me now would be far worse than telling me."

"My poor Jane ! Well, the wise woman's prediction is this : That you will be married, as I said before, and that you and your husband will live happily together for twelve months. At the end of that time, your husband will take to drinking. He will go on from bad to worse ; he will break up your little home, and bring you to poverty ; and, in the end, he will die mad drunk in a hospital."

"Oh, Heaven ! can all this be true ?" cried the white-faced Jane, as she rose tremblingly to her feet.

"Unfortunately, that is not all," resumed the pitiless Charlotte. "Your child—for you will have one little girl—will be stolen from you by gipsies ; and you, in your despair at being thus bereft of all you loved on earth, will put an end to your sufferings by drowning yourself."

Charlotte paused and listened. The frightened girl was crying ; and as the sound fell on Charlotte's ears, the malicious smile crept over her face again. "Soft-hearted fool ! I'll teach you to neglect my room another time," she murmured below her breath ; then, as the girl's sobbing still continued, she laughed one of her little, cold-blooded laughs. Not to have saved her life, could she, at that moment, have overcome the impulse.

Jane straightened her neck at the sound, and turned a sharp, suspicious glance on Charlotte, and began to wipe her eyes with the corner of her apron.

"Did the wise woman really and truly write down all that you have just told me ?" she asked.

"Of course she did !" answered Charlotte, in a decisive tone. "Do you think I am telling you a lie ?"

"Then, perhaps, Miss Charlotte, you will kindly show me the paper where it is all set down ?"

"Oh, I burnt the paper !" said ready-Charlotte. "There was no use in keeping it, you know, when I knew its contents so well."

"But how did you know what the paper said, when you couldn't see to read it?" persisted Jane.

"Oh, the wise woman herself read it over to me three times, and that was quite enough. After that, I knew the contents of it by heart."

"And then you burnt the paper?"

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"Why, just this," said the excited Jane. "I don't believe a word of what you've been telling me. It's just a heap of lies, and nothing else. You have made it all up out of your own head to frighten me, because you've got a spite against me. My Bill kill himself with drinking, indeed! Why, he's a teetotaler, and hasn't tasted a drop of drink these five years! I must say, that I think it's a great shame that a young lady like you hasn't something better to employ her time with than venting her spite on them as is under her by trying to frighten 'em. There'll be a judgment on you some of these days for your goings on—just mark my words; though, indeed, for the matter of that, there's something about you now that's not right; for who ever before saw a young woman of your age with grey hair and ——"

"What is that you say?" said Charlotte quickly. She had been so taken aback by Jane's sudden onslaught, that, till that moment, she had not been able to offer a word in reply.

"There! now I've put my foot in it," said Jane, on the verge of crying again.

"Will you please repeat what you said just now about my hair?" said Charlotte, in quiet, measured tones.

"I said what I oughtn't to have said, miss; and I beg your pardon for it," said Jane apologetically. "But not another word shall you get out of me, good or bad; so I'll just wish you good morning. No, miss, it's no use your asking me; wild horses shouldn't get another word out of me. I've put my foot in it, and I'll go."

And go she did; but on the stairs she turned, and opening the door of Charlotte's room, so as just to admit her head, she said, "You've no occasion, miss, to take any notice of what I said about your hair; it was only a bit of my impert'nence."

Her hair grey! Was there, could there be any truth in what the girl had said? Her first impulse was to ring the bell and summon one of the other servants and question her. But, no; that would be too humiliating. "I'll wait till Tib comes," she said to herself, "and force the truth from *her*."

But, indeed, was it not utterly preposterous to think that there could be a syllable of truth in the vile words made use of by Jane? Her hair, ever since she could recollect anything, had been of a beautiful chestnut hue—other people beside herself had called it beautiful; and she distinctly remembered Hugh saying to her one morning, only a week or two ago, "Those chestnut tresses of yours

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Her hair grey! Was there, could there be any truth in what the girl had said? Her first impulse was to ring the bell and summon one of the other servants and question her. But, no; that would be too humiliating. I'll wait till Tib comes," she said to herself, "and force the truth from *her*."

But, indeed, was it not utterly preposterous to think that there could be a syllable of truth in the vile words made use of by Jane? Her hair, ever since she could recollect anything, had been of a beautiful chestnut hue—other people beside herself had called it beautiful; and she distinctly remembered Hugh saying to her one morning, only a week or two ago, "Those chestnut tresses of yours

Charley, must take up a good slice of your time every morning, seeing the elaborate style of dressing them to which you have lately taken." How, then, was it possible that her hair could be grey, unless Hugh, and all her other friends, had entered into a conspiracy to deceive her? And yet—and with a sinking heart she confessed the fact to herself—Jane's unpremeditated words had rung in her ears, at the moment of their utterance, like the very accents of truth. And then, the girl's evident desire to retract what she had said, and her refusal to add any confirmation to a statement which had apparently slipped off her tongue's end before she knew what was coming. How was Charlotte to sum it all up? To wait for Tib, as she told herself before, was evidently the only thing that could be done; but, then, Tib would not be here for nearly four hours yet, and she, Charlotte, was, oh! so wildly impatient to have her doubts set at rest at once and for ever.

Neither her work nor her music had any charms for her this morning; she could only walk her room restlessly and unceasingly like some tameless, imprisoned creature, and count off one quarter after another as they were chimed by the little clock on the mantelpiece.

Tib came in punctually as the clock struck two. She closed the door timidly behind her, and advanced into the room. Her quick eyes detected in a moment that something more than ordinary was amiss with Charlotte.

"Lock the door, and come here," said Charlotte, bringing her weary walk to an end.

Tib obeyed, but not without certain inward misgivings. Was Charlotte going to pinch her, or pull her hair, or box her ears? Had some little bird told about that half pot of jam given her by the housekeeper the day before yesterday?

Taking the girl firmly by the shoulders, and stooping so as to bring her face on a level with Tib's, Charlotte said, "Tib, what—colour—is—my hair?"

"A bootiful chestnut, Miss Charlotte," answered Tib, without a moment's hesitation.

"Little liar!" hissed Charlotte. "Tell me the truth, or I will stitch up your eyelids, and then lock you up all night in the loft with Captain Bones. Do you hear? The truth!—the truth!—the truth!"

Tib trembled and hesitated; then she tried to writhe out of Charlotte's grasp, but the blind girl's fingers held her like a vice.

"Vile little imp! do you refuse to answer my question?" said Charlotte. "What is—the—colour—of—my—hair? The truth—do you hear, or it will be worse for you."

"Grey."

"Oh!" She let go the girl, and caught at a chair, and sank into it as one suddenly smitten with a pain that was beyond endurance;

and so lay for a minute or two, with her head resting on the back of the chair, in utter silence.

Then she raised her head, and beckoning to Tib to come near, she put out her hand, and grasped that of the girl. Once, twice, she essayed to speak ; her lips formed the words, but no sound came from them. Then she gave a great sigh, and rousing herself by a further effort, she said pitifully, "Tib, how long has my hair been—grey ? "

"Ever since I first knew you, Miss Charlotte."

"Oh ! " Then, after a pause, "Why did you say my hair was chestnut, Tib ? "

"The Doctor, Miss Charlotte, he told me, the first day I came, that on no account was I to let out that I knew your hair was grey."

"That will do. You can go now, Tib. I shall not want you any more to-day."

But Tib stood her ground, fingering a corner of her apron nervously. The sight of Charlotte's white, drawn face, and the agony that shone out of her sightless eyes, touched the girl's simple heart and swept all grievances from her memory.

"Oh, Miss Charlotte ! don't please take on in that way," she said, and then her words were stopped by tears.

But Charlotte waved her away, though with nothing of her usual impatience, and her lips said, "Leave me, leave me," although Tib failed to catch the words. So, still crying, the girl went slowly out of the room, and closed the door gently behind her.

Then Charlotte, feeling that she was alone, got up, and groped her way to the door with outstretched hands, as though she had been smitten with blindness that day for the first time, and locked it. Then she went back to her chair, a large easy one, built originally for some person of ample proportions, and coiling herself up in it, she let her head droop forward on to her knees ; and crouching thus, in tearless silence, allowed hour after hour to pass unheeded away.

The housekeeper sent up word that dinner was ready, but she neither moved nor answered, and a second summons at tea-time was treated with equal indifference. Later on, when Hugh came home, they told him that Miss Charlotte had been locked up in her own room ever since morning, and had refused to come down to her meals. So Hugh went upstairs himself, and knocked at the green-baize door, and asked Charlotte what was the matter with her, and whether she was not coming downstairs to keep him company for an hour before bed-time. She roused herself sufficiently to answer his appeal. "I am not well, and I do not intend going downstairs to-night," she said.

But Hugh persisted. "If you are not well," he said, "there is all the more need why I should see you, and do what I can to make you better."

"I cannot see you to-night. Pray go, and leave me in peace," was all that Charlotte vouchsafed to reply ; and then she resumed

her former position in the chair, and neither stirred nor spoke again till the clock struck midnight.

Then she got out of the chair, and stretched her cramped, chilled limbs. She was one mass of aches. Her head ached, her heart ached, every bone in her body ached. She pressed her fingers to her hot, tearless eyes ; and then, with a weary sigh, she staggered forward into her bedroom, and sinking on to the bed without undressing, she drew a corner of the coverlet over her, and tried to forget her misery in sleep.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### AT BROOK LODGE.

WHEN Miss Davenant, on her way back to the post-office, was overtaken by Esther Sarel, and had the telegram put into her hands which informed her that an accident had befallen her sister, she at once turned her face towards Irongate House, and hurried home as quickly as possible, first despatching Esther to the station to inquire when the next train would start for Milhampton. Her imagination, already excited by what she had gone through at the post-office, at once took alarm, and pictured Trix as dying or dead ; and such a thought was sufficient to drive all lesser considerations from her mind, leaving room only for a burning desire to hasten to her poor darling as fast as steam could carry her, and ascertain the worst with her own eyes.

Esther was back at Irongate House almost as soon as Margaret. The next train would start in three-quarters of an hour. Esther ran for a cab, while Margaret packed her little bag and gave a few parting instructions to Mrs. Greene, the housekeeper. In this sudden trouble that had come upon her she had for a time forgotten all about the events at the post-office ; but now, at the last moment, as she stood with the bag in her hand listening for the wheels of the coming cab, she heard, as it were, the whisper of some hideous familiar : "What have you done with the letter ?" It seemed days ago, instead of one short hour only, since she had been chatting gaily with Miss Ivimpey ; since she had been beset by that horrible temptation, and had bartered away her peace of mind for ever ; since she had dipped her foot into that vast ocean of crime which surges round the world unceasingly, to touch which is to infect the soul with moral leprosy, from which with infinite difficulty only, and after many bitter strivings, can it ever be cleansed again.

She hurried back to her own room and locked the door ; and then, with a quick, frantic gesture, she snatched the crumpled letter from her bosom. The past was irrevocable ; neither prayers nor lamentations could render nugatory the deed she had done. But the secret should be locked in her own heart ; she would have no mute witness

rising at some unexpected moment to accuse her of this thing in the face of the world. With a steady hand she held the letter over the lighted candle, and in another minute nothing would have been left of it but ashes; but just as it was browning to the flame, the hollow echo of a脚步 sounded through the corridor outside, and scared her from her purpose. She drew back the letter, and with white face and straining eyes stared over her shoulder at the door—but only for one moment; the next, with a bitter smile at her own weakness, she recognised the脚步 as that of the old housekeeper on her way to her own room.

A sudden change of purpose! She would not burn the letter. After all, it might so happen that some happy occasion would offer itself for her to reveal everything to Dr. Randolph, and give him the letter, trusting to the goodness of his heart to find forgiveness for what she had done. But even granting that no such opportunity should ever arise; or that if it did, her want of courage should preclude her from taking advantage of it; would it, even in that case, be wise on her part to destroy the letter? Would it not, in fact, be equivalent to building up between herself and that narrow path of rectitude from which she had wandered, a wall whose limits she might never overpass? So long as the letter remained in her keeping, there was just a faint possibility that the wretched deed of which she had been guilty might ultimately work itself out in some inscrutable way to a happy issue. Destroy the letter and even this far-away hope would be denied her.

The letter must be preserved.

On a chest of drawers in her dressing-room, stood a small ebony casket inlaid with silver, and having Margaret's initials engraved on a plate let into the lid. It had been a birthday gift from her father when she was quite a girl, and was almost the sole relic now remaining to her of that pleasant, far-away time. This casket was seldom locked, and was used by Margaret merely as a receptacle for various odds and ends of her property which had no proper location of their own. But underneath this trumpery the casket had a false bottom, the secret of which was known to Margaret alone; and it was here that, after a brief deliberation, she determined to temporarily conceal the letter. She would have time enough to seek out a more effectual hiding-place after her return from Milhampton; meanwhile, this would do excellently.

So the letter was hidden; and Margaret gave a great sigh of relief as it dropped from her fingers into the casket. It seemed—fallaciously enough, one must admit—as if the weight of her guilt were in some degree lessened, now that she no longer carried so terrible a witness about with her. How her head ached! But she had no time, just now, to give more than a passing thought to such a trifle. She heard the wheels of the cab crunching the gravel outside, and at the sound all her thoughts flew back to Trix, with a pang

of self-reproach that they had left her poor darling even for a moment. One last look at the casket, and then she hurried away.

Midnight was just striking as the train containing Margaret Davenant drew up at Milhampton station. Madame Ducange and her English brother-in-law were waiting on the platform in expectation of her coming. Madame—a little withered Frenchwoman of sixty, dressed in a black silk calash and lace mittens in place of gloves and bonnet—received her old pupil with tearful eyes, and a kiss, slightly tinctured with snuff, on each cheek ; but it was her quiet, matter-of-fact brother-in-law who at once calmed Margaret's anxieties as to the condition of Trix. That young lady, he told Margaret, was neither dying, nor likely to die for an indefinite period to come. She had slipped as she was stepping down the two steps leading into the garden, and had sprained her ankle rather severely. But worse than the pain arising from the fall, was the shock to her system ; and when, towards evening, some slight symptoms of fever set in, nothing would satisfy Madame but telegraphing for Margaret, despite the doctor's assurance that Trix would be better on the morrow.

And better she was, greatly to Margaret's satisfaction, although still unable to get up. Next morning, however, she was nearly well, and Margaret set out by the noon train on her return to Helsingham, leaving Trix, somewhat reluctantly, to spend a couple more days with Madame Ducange, who would fain have had Margaret stay too. But Margaret had that on her mind which unfitted her for all social intercourse ; for now that she was easy on Trix's account, her thoughts went back instinctively to that ugly business of the purloined letter, and dwelt on it with dull, unwearying persistency, as though it were a deed big enough, and black enough, to fill the scope of heaven and earth, and dwarf into utter disproportion all the other actions, good and bad, of her antecedent life. As yet she was new to the companionship ; she had not learnt the art of mastering her demon, and keeping him fastened up out of sight of the world, only letting him out to torment her in darkness and solitude, when no other soul was by to see her misery.

"It was not I, Margaret Davenant, who did that accursed thing ; it was a fiend that possessed me," she kept whispering to herself as she rode homeward in the train. "But nothing, nothing, nothing can ever take away the stain !"

Her anxious eyes fixed themselves on the casket the moment she entered her own room. It was there, just as she had left it, and had apparently not been touched since. With a quick, spasmodic effort, very different from her usual stately, slow-timed movements, she crossed the floor and opened the secret drawer. The briefest possible glance was sufficient, the letter was still there. She shut the drawer with a shudder, and then locked the upper lid of the casket. After all, it was the safest hiding-place for the letter that she could think of.

As regarded the question of reparation, she at once confessed to

herself that, after so long a time, she no longer possessed the requisite moral courage to avow what she had done. No, not even to kind-hearted Dr. Randolph, to whom the letter was addressed. She had lowered herself for ever in her own eyes, but she could not bear to repeat the process before the eyes of another, and that other a man whom she liked and respected, and whose good opinion she was anxious to retain. "What is done cannot be undone," she said to herself. "But no living soul shall ever know that it was I who took the letter."

Ah, Margaret Davenant, if this indeed be so, why that faint, troubled consciousness that the Nemesis which waits on crime is already on your track? Why do you so often start up in the dreary watches of the night, deeming that you hear the far-away, muffled sound of "footsteps upon wool" advancing nearer and nearer by devious paths whose issues the future alone can reveal?

In the course of the afternoon of the day of her return, Margaret received the following note:—

"Brook Lodge, Friday.

"CARA MIA,—Pray take pity on a poor mortal and come and see me for an hour or two this afternoon. This is vacation time with you, so that you cannot plead your pupils as an excuse. Robert is out of town, and I am getting quite low-spirited for want of society. I will send the brougham for you in an hour.

"Your affectionate friend,

"H. CARDALE."

Miss Davenant sent a line in reply, saying what time she would be at Brook Lodge, but declining the offer of the brougham. Her first thought had been to excuse herself on the plea of illness. She felt unfitted just yet for any society save that of her own pursuing thoughts, which, let her twist and double as she might, still bayed after her, like thirsty bloodhounds that no device of hers could throw off the trail. "If I stay here alone much longer, I think I shall go crazy," she said to herself. "I dread society, and yet it is only in society that I can escape from myself. I will go to Brook Lodge. If I cannot be the Margaret Davenant that I was a week ago, at least the world shall never suspect that I am changed."

As Margaret walked through sheltered lane and sunny field on her way to Brook Lodge—for this afternoon she chose rather to skirt the outside of the town than walk through the busy streets—she felt glad that she had decided to go. Both mind and body seemed to drink in draughts of fresh, pure life, and the sweet influences of Nature shed themselves like balm over her troubled spirit. She thought of the woman she was going to see, and for the first time, Margaret experienced a sense of unworthiness at venturing into the presence of her friend. She knew well whence this strange new feeling proceeded. Alas! that it would never be strange to her again.

Mrs. Cardale, a widow and childless, was the sister of Mr. Robert

Bruhn, the largest manufacturer in Helsingham. After her husband's death, Mrs. Cardale had come to superintend her brother's household, but failing health had long obliged her to pass the winter and spring of each year in Italy or the south of France, so that she really spent only about five months out of every twelve at Helsingham. Margaret's acquaintance with Mrs. Cardale had arisen through her having to go on one occasion to Brook Lodge in place of Miss Easterbrook, who was ill at the time, to answer certain inquiries as to the terms and constitution of the school, which Mrs. Cardale was desirous of making in the interest of one of her friends who lived at a distance. The acquaintanceship thus begun quickly ripened into a friendship that was based on genuine liking and mutual esteem ; for, the point of contact once struck, there was too much similarity in the tastes and dispositions of these two women, despite their difference in the social scale, for them not to gravitate naturally each to the other, and a week seldom passed without seeing Margaret a visitor at Brook Lodge. Mrs. Cardale only went out for an hour now and then, on sunny afternoons. Not infrequently she would call with the carriage at Irongate House, and carry Margaret away with her for a pleasant drive into the country.

Brook Lodge stood within its own grounds, on a pleasant elevation half a mile out of Helsingham. It was a substantial, red-brick residence, evidently built for comfort rather than for show ; with spacious and lofty rooms, with wide passages upstairs and down, and with a noble entrance-hall. Substantial comfort was its prevailing characteristic ; and yet you could not be long in Brook Lodge without discovering that its owner was a man of taste and education. The pictures, although few in number, were all good, and all originals ; and were distributed about the house, a few in one room and a few in another, as the taste or whim of Mr. Bruhn had dictated. The engravings were especially fine, and were worth a small fortune in themselves. Literature was not forgotten. Except the dining-room, nearly every room in the house had its own special book-case ; even the bedrooms were no exception to this rule. For Mr. Bruhn chose that both himself and his guests should have a friendly author at their elbow whenever they might be in the humour to enjoy his company : whether it were in the spare half-hour before dressing for dinner ; or as you lay "simmering" in bed of a morning, too wakeful to sleep again, and yet not inclined for getting up ; or in that other odd half-hour when "all the house was mute," as you sat toasting your toes before your dressing-room fire previously to slipping between the sheets ; or, in short, whenever you might feel that a book was your best companion.

Margaret Davenant never entered Brook Lodge without feeling that in some such place as this her home ought to be. The sharp tooth of poverty had bitten deeply into her soul. In the days of her up-hill struggle against the world, when every shilling seemed more

than a shilling, and required careful consideration as to how it could be laid out to the greatest advantage, she had necessarily seen somewhat of the mean and sordid side of life's lining ; her mind had been harassed by the petty cares and anxieties ever attendant on a lack of pence in this age of many wants ; yet, despite all this, she never forgot that the associations of her childhood and youth had been those with which wealth usually surrounds itself. Therefore, to cross the threshold of Brook Lodge, or of any other well-appointed house, was for Margaret to feel herself, in some unconscious sort of way, more of a lady than at other times ; as though she had some inalienable property in all the evidences of taste and refinement which she saw around her, and breathed, as of right, that finer atmosphere in which no vulgar nature can live.

"Here comes my stately Margaret ! How glad I am to see you!" exclaimed Mrs. Cardale as Margaret was ushered by a solemn servant into the invalid's carefully-shaded room.

"And are you any better to-day, dear Mrs. Cardale ?" said Margaret, as the two friends met hand to hand.

"No worse in bodily health, I think, Margaret, but low-spirited and dull. Miss Carruthers wearies me so much that I was glad to give her holiday for a couple of days ; and Robert is away in London."

The speaker was one of those delicate, frail-looking women one sometimes meets, whose little lamp of life requires to be carefully shielded from every rude blast : a rare exotic needing the shelter of a conservatory to protect it from our inclement English skies.

"I am afraid," said Margaret with a smile, "that I shall never succeed in winning Miss Carruthers's good opinion."

"You will no longer be the Margaret Davenant of my heart when Betsy Carruthers looks upon you with unjaundiced eyes," said Mrs. Cardale. "Both you and I are as lost sheep in her sight. And yet she is a good woman in her way, mechanically and methodically good ; but, oh ! such terribly dull company in bad weather. I have made up my mind to give her her *congé* in autumn, for I cannot bear the idea of having to pass another winter in her society. And now we will have tea," added Mrs. Cardale ; "I have waited purposely for you. Afterwards, we will drive as far as Oldenshaw, where there is a wonderful new conservatory which I am longing to see. Just touch the bell, dear, please. You really deserve a good scolding for not letting me send the brougham for you."

"The day was so pleasant and breezy that I thought a walk through the fields would do me good."

"I am sure you get walking enough at other times, without having to trudge all the way to Brook Lodge to see a sick woman. But I know your wilful disposition of old, and suppose that you must have your own way in such matters. You will be a good, kind soul, and read to me for an hour this evening, will you not ?"

"With pleasure, if you wish it."

"I do wish it, very much. It always does me good to hear you read ; and poor Miss Carruthers is not here to-day to scowl at you with jealous eyes. I expect to have the Laureate's long looked-for new poem to-morrow. I told Dawson to send me a couple of copies as early as possible, one of which I intend for Miss Margaret Davenant."

Tea was served in a dainty service of egg-shell china, much affected by Mrs. Cardale, who averred that only from porcelain of the thinnest and purest could the genuine flavour of the Chinese leaf be educed.

They were still sipping their bohea and chatting away on twenty indifferent topics, when the sound of a man's voice downstairs made Mrs. Cardale's cheek flush, and a little cry of pleasure to burst from her lips. "That is Robert's voice !" she exclaimed. "He has come back a day before his time."

Scarcely were the words out of her mouth when Mr. Bruhn came hastily into the room, and after kissing his sister, turned and greeted Miss Davenant with much cordiality.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

MR. BRUHN.

MR. ROBERT BRUHN, of Helsingham, manufacturer and magistrate, was about forty-two years old ; broad-set, well-built and nearly six feet in height ; with hair, beard and moustache that, in these latter days, were slightly grizzled. His eyes were large, grey and full of vivacity ; and his well-cut, aquiline features had a grim, quiet earnestness about them, that, somehow, put people in mind of the face of an old Crusader or Knight Templar seen somewhere in effigy ; for about such faces there is a strange family likeness. In Mr. Bruhn's appearance there was nothing careless or slovenly ; his clothes were always well and fashionably made ; and he was so carefully groomed and got up, without recourse to artificial means, that he was generally taken to be a much younger man than he really was.

"But what has brought you home to-day, Robert ?" asked Mrs. Cardale as soon as the first greetings were over. "I understood that your time was not up till to-morrow."

"I managed to finish my business late last night ; and, as I was getting anxious to be at home again, I decided to return this morning instead of giving myself a day's holiday, as I at first intended to do. And so you really think that you are no worse than when I left home ?

- I am delighted to hear it."

"Dear Robert ! But we could have spared you another day, sir. It was foolish of you not to secure your holiday while you had an opportunity of doing so. Now that you are here, you will take a cup of tea with us, will you not ?"

"Not at this time of the day, thank you. Besides, I have no time

to stay just now. There are five days' letters at the office crying out to be opened and read."

"That everlasting business!" sighed Mrs. Cardale.

"Yes, that everlasting business!" answered her brother. "Sovereigns are not usually picked up in the street, Mrs. Cardale; it is necessary to work for them, and work hard, too, before they come to us. Be good enough to bear that little fact in mind next time you ——"

"Hold your tongue, sir, and tell me what you have brought me from town."

"Let me consider. Firstly, one box of Jouvin's gloves—size, six and a quarter; item, one crape shawl, marked *recherché* in the window of the establishment at which it was purchased, so that it must be something superior; item, the last new things in photographs; item, one jar of Indian preserve from Fortnum and Mason's, the same as before; together with a few other trifles that I don't remember just now."

"A thousand thanks; but the best present is yourself. I am glad you are safe at home again; there is always a vague sense of uneasiness upon me when you are away."

"Your anxiety for my welfare is quite refreshing, Etta. I am pleased to find you in such good spirits to-day—a result which I attribute entirely to Miss Davenant, whom I hope we shall see much oftener at Brook Lodge than we have done of late."

"You are very kind," said Margaret; "but it was only yesterday that I was debating the other side of the question with myself, and I came to the conclusion that it is not good for me to go much into society—such indulgences only tend to make me discontented with the prosaic duties of my position at Irongate House."

"Don't talk nonsense, Margaret," said Mrs. Cardale impetuously. "Change is good for everyone; you know that as well as I do; and if you shut yourself up, month after month, in that dismal old Irongate House, with no society but that of Mamma Easterbrook and her pupils; why, in that case, you will soon be in your grave."

"I have gone through much worse inflictions than that," said Margaret with a smile; "and yet I am here still."

"Well, I hope we shall see as much of you as possible," said Mr. Bruhn warmly. "My sister is somewhat fastidious in the choice of her friends. As a rule, she and the ladies of Helsingham do not get on together very well; and I value her so highly, that when I know she has found a friend after her own heart, I cannot but wish to see that friend under my roof as often as may be."

Margaret smiled, and then her heart gave a little sigh. "Ah! If they only knew all," she thought, "they would never care to see me here again."

"And now I really must go," said Mr. Bruhn, "or I shall not save this evening's post."

"You will not stay late to-night, Robert?" said Mrs. Cardale.

"No; I will try to be home again by eight. Good-bye, Etta. Good-bye, Miss Davenant, for the present. I hope to find you here when I return."

A few minutes later, the carriage came round, and the two ladies were driven five miles across country to Oldenshaw, where they visited the famous conservatory spoken of by Mrs. Cardale, who made several purchases of choice young plants for her fernery.

On their way home, said Margaret to Mrs. Cardale: "Mr. Bruhn does not seem to have much leisure time to call his own."

"No, indeed. He is always anxious, always busy. And yet there is no real necessity for all this hard work, because he might retire any day with an ample fortune; besides which, Robert is not like many so-called 'clever business men,' who, when they leave their offices, leave three-fourths of their intellect behind them, and are, in all other relations of life, the most commonplace of mortals. Robert was well educated, has read much, and is fond of travel; and he could find a thousand ways to dignify and render useful his well-earned leisure. I have seen this craving for work growing over him like a husk, becoming thicker and more difficult to break with each succeeding year, ever since that terrible time when he lost both wife and child in one brief summer day."

"Lost both wife and child!" said Margaret. "I did not know that Mr. Bruhn had ever been married."

"Probably not; you have not been long in Helsingham; and both with Robert and myself the subject is still such a painful one that we rarely allude to it. He married, very young, an old school friend of mine. It was a genuine love match on both sides, and a happier couple I have never seen. They had one child, a boy; a lovely little fellow, but delicate from his birth; and for the benefit of his health they went, when he was about two years old, to spend the summer months at a watering-place on the Welsh coast. Amy was an excellent swimmer, and very fond of bathing; but one unfortunate day she ventured out too far and had not sufficient strength left to swim back to shore; the tide, too, was just beginning to ebb, and she was carried out and drowned before anyone could get to her assistance. Poor, dear Amy! Her body was found among the rocks at low water. As if that was not enough for Robert to bear, his little Willy was taken ill the same evening and died at daybreak next morning. Twenty years have come and gone since that fatal day, but it still wrings my heart to speak of it."

There was silence for some minutes, and then Mrs. Cardale spoke again.

"Then it was, when he was left, as it were, alone in the world, that Robert began to seek in the cares and anxieties of business an opiate that might, in some small degree, soothe the sharp agony of his bereavement. He left it for time and hard work to cicatrize the

wound in his heart ; and I am happy to think that, as years have rolled away, peace has come to him, and cheerfulness and content. More than that on this side the grave cannot be looked for. But under that grim, philosophic exterior which he presents to the world, I know that he carries about in his inmost heart a secret casket of tender regrets and chastened sorrow, into which no eye but mine is ever privileged to look; and once every year, on the anniversary of his loss, he makes a pilgrimage to that little country churchyard on the Welsh coast, that he may gaze once more on the grave of his lost treasures. At first, he merely sought in business some enforced relief for his tortured mind ; but as time went on, he began to love his work for itself, and now it has become a pleasing tyranny, from which he no longer cares to free himself. This is all as it should be, I dare say ; for a man without work of some kind to do is good for little—if only Robert did not make quite such a slave of himself ; if only he would shift on to other shoulders some portion of that burden which he will persist in carrying himself, when there is no real necessity for him to do so. And that is just the point where he and I disagree, if we can be said ever to disagree ; and what I particularly dread is, that after I shall be gone, when there will be no one to address even a word of remonstrance to him, he will go on, year after year, burying himself more deeply in those sordid business cares—and they do become sordid when twisted beyond their proper uses ; that as he grows older, all his best qualities of head and heart will slowly deteriorate, and that he will sink at last into a hard, unlovely old age, with few cares, hopes or fears beyond those to be found within the four walls of his mill. Heaven preserve Robert Bruhn from such a fate ! But see ! those are the lights of Helsingham shining in the valley. Our drive is nearly at an end.”

(*To be continued.*)



## IN THE LOTUS LAND.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "LETTERS FROM  
MAJORCA," "THE BRETONS AT HOME," ETC. ETC.



before then : what manner of people, what occupation, what religion they possessed, what amount of intelligence and civilization, even what physical development : this will never be known. It is lost in that fathomless gulf of the PAST, as vast, mysterious and remote to us of to-day as the very Heavens above with their countless worlds moving in that eternal silence of space before which we stand in wondering awe. In studying these records the very syllables of Job seem to recur to the

**T**HE most interesting history in the world is the history of Ancient Egypt. It goes back to times which seem to us now almost as remote as the period of Creation. Imagination can as easily conjure up the epoch when "the earth was without form and void, a darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," as attempt to realize the ways and life of a people that existed five thousand years before the Christian Era, and, for all we know, in ages still farther removed.

The earliest records of Egyptian history take one back at least to this date. What was taking place

memory with a strange application: "Oh that my words were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!" For it is due to the inscriptions and hieroglyphics upon the stones and tombs and monuments of the past, that much of the history of Ancient Egypt is known to us at all.

Until the key to these inscriptions was discovered, this history was buried in a mystery and obscurity as profound as the silence of the sphinx or the utterances of an oracle. Egyptologists were at variance one with another; all was a matter of surmise and speculation; these learned men, like doctors, were content to disagree. All that was known of this interesting and ancient people came from Herodotus, from Diodorus the Sicilian historian, and from Manetho of Sebennytus who lived under Ptolemy Philadelphus three hundred years before the Christian Era. Manetho, as High Priest of the Temple of Heliopolis, had charge of the sacred archives, and from these documents composed his History of Egypt. Heliopolis, the ancient city of the sun, is within a short drive of Cairo, lying to the N.E., but nothing of its greatness remains to this day excepting a solitary obelisk and the outer walls of the city. Unfortunately the history of Manetho has not descended to posterity, excepting a few fragments quoted by Josephus in his *Jewish Antiquities*, and a few other fragments found in Eusebius. But his List of Kings has been handed down to us in the writings of certain Christian chronologists, and in spite of the lapse of time, of frequent transcriptions and quotations, seems to have remained very much as he compiled it. This list is the only existing record of the earlier monarchs.

The history of Egypt is divided into five or seven great epochs or periods, comprising thirty-four dynasties.

The First Period consisted of the Ancient Empire, from the first to the eleventh Dynasty. The Second Period, or Middle Empire, from the eleventh to the eighteenth Dynasty. The Third Period, or New Empire, from the eighteenth to the thirty-first Dynasty. Then came Egypt under the Greeks, forming the thirty-second and thirty-third Dynasties, and a Fourth Period; next Egypt under the Romans, the thirty-fourth Dynasty and the Fifth Period: followed by the Conquest of Egypt by the Arabs and the reign of Mohammedanism. This in turn yielded to the Turks, and the Seventh Period, ending with the recognition of Mohammet Ali and the present vice-regal Dynasty.

The First, or Pagan Period, dated from the remotest records to the year 381 of the Christian Era: a total period of 5,385 years.

The Second, or Christian Period, from A.D. 381, when the Emperor Theodosius forbade the worship of heathen gods and confirmed by law the Christian religion, down to the year 640. During this period Egypt established the reign of the Byzantine Emperors, who held their court at Constantinople.

The Third Period was the Mussulman, dating from the conquest of

Egypt by the officers of Mahomet in the year 640. This conquest established Islamism in the country of the Pharaohs : a creed that, after a lapse of nearly thirteen centuries, still flourishes. The worship of the "False Prophet" owns its millions of followers.

The word *Dynasty* was first applied to the different groups or families of Pagan kings who reigned during the five thousand years before the dawn of Christianity. These Dynasties had different towns for their capital, at different periods of time. Memphis, Thebes and other places were in turn the seat of government, and each Dynasty is distinguished by the name of its capital. Besides these, there were Ethiopian, Persian, Greek and Roman Dynasties, as each of these nations invaded and conquered Egypt. As we have seen, the number of Dynasties amounted to thirty-four.

The First Period, then, was the Pagan. Of this the First Epoch was the Ancient Empire : the Early or Primæval Monarchy. It began with Mena or Menes, and ended with the eleventh Dynasty. What was taking place before the reign of Mena will probably remain a matter of conjecture for ever, unless new discoveries should one day throw fresh light upon the subject : a very improbable event in these days of close and lengthened research, when every foot of this ancient and interesting land has been trodden, scrutinised and debated over by hundreds of antiquarian enthusiasts.

Up to the year 1868 very little had been sought and found in the shape of Egyptian antiquities. A few specimens existed in the museums of Berlin, Leyden and Turin, and this was nearly all. During the winter of 1868, however, two French travellers explored the Valley of the Nile, in the hope of discovering ancient remains ; objects of stone or silex, similar to those which distinguish the Stone Age in Europe. The result was the collecting of a large number of tools and implements of silex, found in the whole length of the Nile Valley ; at Gizeh, Sakkara, Thebes and other places of antiquity.

This aroused attention and interest, and since those days large collections have been found and formed. In October, 1869, other French explorers discovered in the Valley of Kings an immense workshop for the manufacture of tools of silex. This was soon followed by other discoveries of the same nature.

It was difficult to give a date to these implements. The first explorers considered that they belonged to a pre-historic age : a period corresponding with that far-distant time when a mysterious and unknown but evidently civilised race, occupied the whole of Eastern Europe. A similarity of construction led to these conclusions.

This theory was disputed by the Egyptologists, who considered that as silex was frequently employed in the construction of historical tombs and monuments, so these silex tools and implements should be considered as belonging only to the historical period : a theory again combated by geological argument, which left the whole problem in doubt.



ANCIENT TEMPLE AT LUXOR.

Out of all this uncertainty, one thing seemed apparent : that the usage of stone implements continued very late in Egypt, even up to our own times. It remains a problem whether a pre-historic race had not much to do with the manufacture of these implements. And if so, it may be asked whether the Egyptian people began with the Stone Age to lay the foundation, by their own internal strength, for that wonderful degree of civilization to which they had attained in the days of the Pharaohs : or whether the invasion and occupation of a strange people initiated them into a civilization already existing in some other portion of the globe.

M. Mariette-Bey, the great Egyptologist, is of the latter opinion. He considers that the ancient Egyptians sprang from the primitive race inhabiting the south-west of Asia. These people were called after Koosh or Cush, the brother of Canaan, as mentioned in the Bible : a theory to be met by the objection that the Egyptian race dates to a period far anterior to the Jewish. Mariette-Bey holds to his opinion. He considers that these people immigrated into Egypt, settled themselves in the Valley of the Nile, until then an unknown, uninhabited desert, and that they were already in an advanced state of civilization.

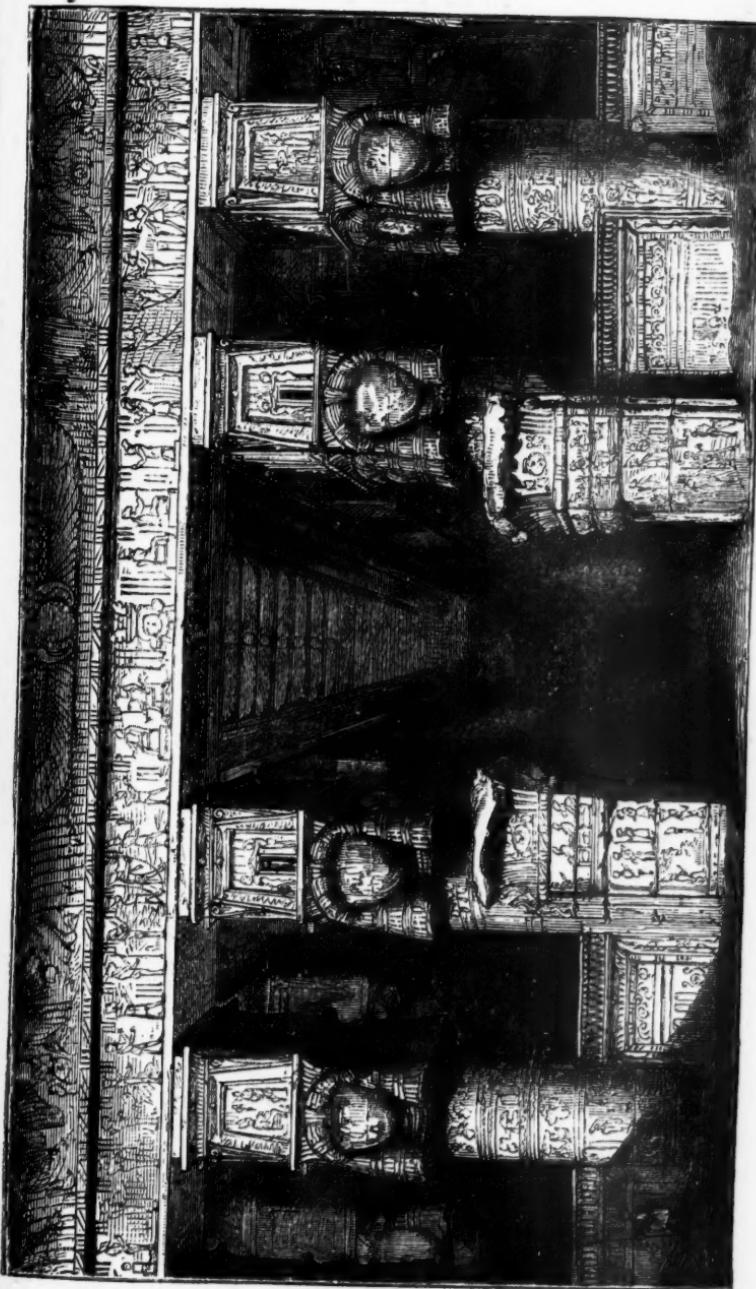
Again, there are naturalists who consider that at the end of the Third Epoch, before the times of the Pharaohs, the Valley of the Nile was covered with a rich vegetation, of which the Petrified Forest of Cairo is a distinct evidence : that, therefore, there is nothing to contradict the supposition that the Valley, then habitable, was occupied by a race anterior to the Asiatic immigration. The character, civilization and language of the Egyptian race are so essentially local and African that they give strong support to this theory.

The first Dynasty was called the Thinite, from This or Thinis, a town whence Mena, the founder of the Egyptian Monarchy, is supposed to have sprung. Thinis was situated in Middle Egypt, near to Abydos, and seems to have been a place of importance and reputation ; but no traces of it remain beyond a few fragments of ruins. Mena founded Memphis, on the left bank of the river, and made it his Capital, and its ruins are amongst the most interesting of the great towns of Antiquity.

The third Dynasty was the Memphite.

These three Dynasties lasted during a period of 769 years. Egypt prospered and grew in wealth and importance. Innumerable towns were built on the banks of the Nile, of which to-day we trace the ruins. Companies were formed for working the copper mines in the Sanaitic Peninsula. To-day this Peninsula is inhabited by the Bedaween—the Towarah tribes, numbering about five thousand. They chiefly live by their camels, and subsist upon the date palm. *Min* also forms an article of commerce, and is the traditional manna that fed the children of Israel in the wilderness. It is a gummy substance given out by the tamarisk tree, and drops for two months every

PORTICO OF ANCIENT TEMPLE AT DENDERAH, ON THE WAY TO THESES.



year, beginning in the autumn. The name is the same as the Hebrew word found in the Bible, and is supposed to have been given to the food by the Israelites, who were at a loss to know of what their miraculous food consisted : "they wist not *what* it was"—*min* or *manna* signifying *what* both in Hebrew and Arabic.

The Towárah tribes of to-day are a quiet and harmless people. Their dress consists of a white shirt with long, open sleeves, fastened at the waist by a girdle, over which is thrown the *Abbayah*, or long cloak of camel's hair. They also wear the fez or turban, not the Kefeyeh or striped handkerchief. The women are veiled, and wear a loose blue gown covered with a mantle of the same colour.

The traditions of these people are intimately connected with Moses and the Israelites. They possess a legend of the Passage of the Red Sea as described in the Bible, placing it, however, at Hammam Pharoon, down the Gulf of Suez. The sulphurous hot-baths existing here are supposed to have been caused, according to tradition, by the efforts made by Pharaoh to escape drowning. They have the "Wells of Moses" at Suez and Gebel Moosa ; the "Seat of Moses" at Hammam Pharoon, where Moses is said to have watched the Egyptians drowning. On Gebel Moosa there is the outline of a human head, made by Moses when he "shrank back as the glory of the Lord passed by." At Wady Berrah there is a divided rock, which Moses is said to have severed ; and in the Wady Feiran is the rock, according to the Bedaween, struck by Moses in his anger. Their biblical traditions are numerous.

The earliest Egyptians had nothing of the negro type about them. They were a white race, with well-formed features and finely-developed heads, but their faces were bronzed by the sun, and their hair was fine and smooth. Altogether, they much resembled the primitive races of Asia, a very different type from the negro population of South Africa. This was long a disputed point, but has now been finally settled by modern explorers.

It seems also certain that civilization began in the north and not in the south of Egypt, ascending, not descending, the Nile ; consequently it could not have come from Ethiopia, as was once supposed. Beyond these two points nothing is known of the historical origin and development of the Egyptians. The scanty records take us back, as we have said, only to Menes, the first known king of Egypt and founder of the first Dynasty.

It was during the fourth Dynasty that the three great Pyramids of Gizeh were built : those geometrical tombs which have ever since been the wonder of the world ; which proved the Egyptians to be a people of vast numbers, skilled in the art of building, possessing resources and powers which to us of to-day are incomprehensible and almost miraculous.

These Pyramids prove them to have been profoundly learned in the deepest and exactest of human sciences. In due time, the art of

Building gave place to that of Architecture ; in place of colossal Pyramids full of geometrical proportions but without grace of outline, arose temples and mosques and tombs, where general effect gave place to charm of detail ; but when these have all passed away, the stupendous works of the early kings will still remain to cast their lengthening shadows upon the desert plain as the sun goes down, and bear witness to a time and a people of which it may be that all other trace and record will then have utterly disappeared.

The first Pyramid was built by Khoufou (called Souphis by Manetho and Cheops by Herodotus) ; the second by Khafra (Chephren in Herodotus) ; the third by Menkera (Menkheres in Herodotus). In round numbers, therefore, the Pyramids were built about four thousand years before the Christian Era.

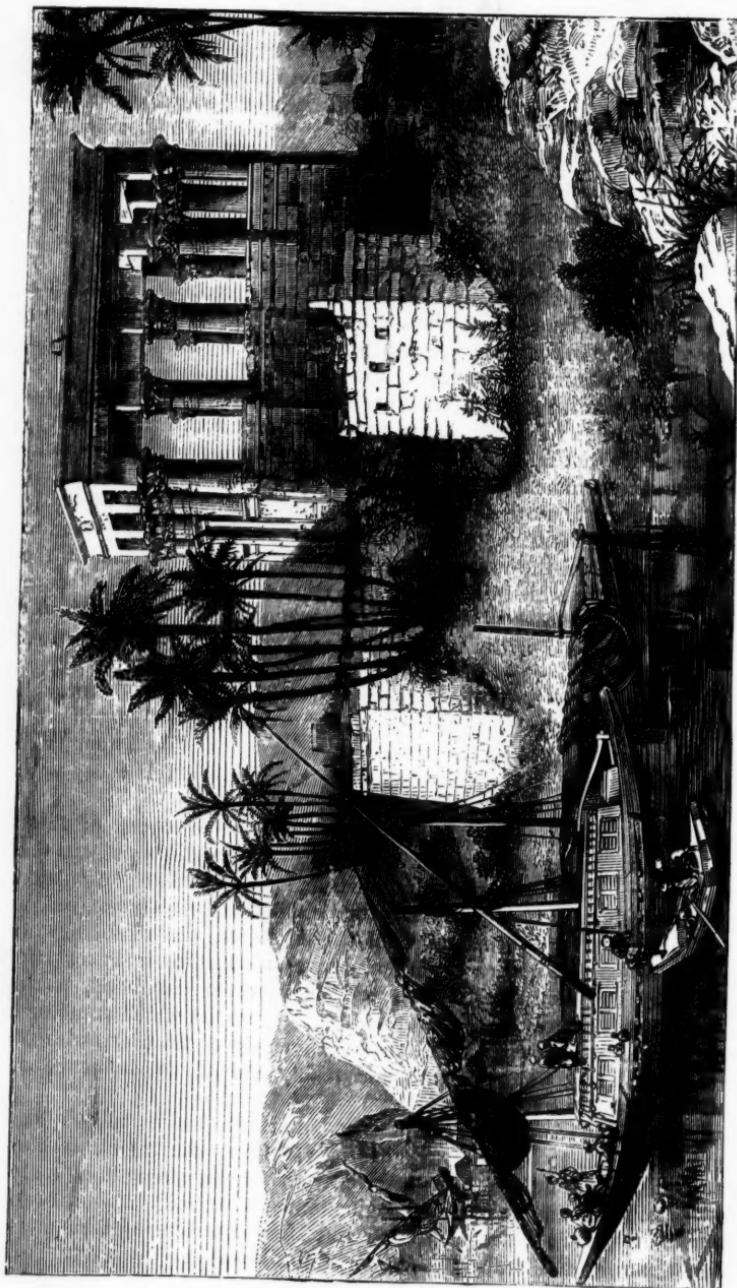
This is admitting the reckoning of Manetho to be correct and placing the reign of Menes at five thousand years B.C. This point is so disputed that different historians vary as much as three thousand years in the commencement of the Egyptian monarchy. The earlier date, however, is now more generally received, and seems probably correct. Khafra not only built the second Pyramid, but is supposed to have constructed the magnificent tomb, or temple, at the foot of the Pyramids, upon which the shadow of the Sphinx falls with a sense of mystery that haunts the beholder long after he has turned away from it. He is the first of the Pharaohs whose statues are now existing.

Then, later on, came changes. The Asiatic tribes invaded Egypt. Towards the eighth Dynasty her power began to decline through misrule and self-indulgence, the penalty, too often, of uninterrupted prosperity. Alien tribes cast envious eyes upon this country of corn and wine, and the kings of the ninth Dynasty were "strangers in the land" and reigned in the Delta.

The visit of Abraham is said to have been made to one of these kings ; which brings us, as far as we are concerned, to perhaps the most interesting period of all Egyptian history. It is that portion with which we have grown familiar in our childhood ; days when, before we had learned the mysteries of the Alphabet, our mothers, with gentle voice and reverent tone, while we stood at their knees and gazed up into their faces with the voiceless awe of childhood, would recount day after day those wonderful Bible stories which combined all the charm of romance, all the rich imagery of the East, with all the force and power of truth and reality and all the influence of things Divine and unseen.

This is one reason why Egypt is so interesting to us all—it has grown familiar to us with our growth. It forms the theme of the first scenes, the first pictures received with all the strength of early impressions and an awakening imagination. What child has not been thrilled by the narrative of Joseph and Mary commencing their midnight journey and taking "the young child down into Egypt?" The very means have seemed so full of the mystery of Divine working—

PHARAOH'S BED ON THE ISLAND OF PHILE.



the "being warned of God in a dream." Who has not listened, absorbed, to that vivid succession of scenes commencing with Abraham and going on to Pharaoh and the Passage of the Red Sea? Who has heard unmoved the history of Joseph, with all his troubles and temptations, while the Hand of God was guiding his destiny and bringing him to great honour? Who has not wept at the meeting of the brothers, when Joseph had to withdraw himself to conceal his emotion: wept at one of the most pathetic passages ever recorded—"Is your father yet alive—the old man of whom ye spake?" Not the writer; not, we are persuaded, many a reader. To many of us the mother's gentle voice must for ever ring in our ears: a voice and face that seemed to us only a little lower than the angels'; and so imbued us with a sense of right and wrong, the beauty of holiness, the hideousness of sin, the inevitable results of keeping to the right hand or turning to the left, that no after falling-away of boyhood or manhood could ever fail to arouse in us the still small voice of conscience, bidding us with more power than an iron tongue or a world's voices combined, return to the pure ways of Pleasantness, the safe paths of Peace.

For this reason, then, Egypt has for us all a special and peculiar interest apart from the mere history of the country; for it is to a great extent the scene of the great religious drama which is the foundation stone of all that is lovely and of good report in our present existence; whilst all our sacred lessons, gathered line upon line, precept upon precept, seem entwined with Egyptian recollections not less than with the Holy Land itself.

The visit of Abraham then took place about the eighth or ninth Dynasty. Nothing of very great importance occurred until the end of the eleventh or Theban Dynasty, which put an end to the reign of the Aliens or Heracleopolites.

With the twelfth Dynasty the line of the ancient kings was reinstated. Amenemhat was the first of them, and when he came to the throne everything of the ancient monarchy had disappeared.

The new Dynasty was a prosperous one. The kings were wise and brave. Trade increased; wealth was added to the country; the Lower Provinces of Egypt were reconquered. Osirtasen I. left many records of his reign behind him. He restored the old Temple of the Sun, with its worship, built the Temple at Karnak, and laid the foundation of the Fayoom. Art and architecture revived, and some of the finest remains, such as the ruined Colonnade at Karnak and the tombs of Beni Hassan, belong to this date. The art of writing had not yet been lost, and many inscriptions of this reign remain. The poetic muse seems for the first time to have touched mankind with her celestial fire. Much attention was given to irrigation and, under Amenemhat III., accomplished the greatest work of this description the world has ever seen. Amongst other gigantic works he thoroughly irrigated the Fayoom and planned and made

Lake Mœris. The lake with its sacred crocodiles has disappeared, but the Fayoom after four thousand years is still the most fertile province of Egypt: essentially a land flowing with milk and honey, and corn and wine.

The Middle Monarchy began with the twelfth Dynasty and ended with the nineteenth. The twentieth Dynasty ushered in the New Empire and began in the year 1288 B.C.

In this twelfth Dynasty many Semitic families entered Egypt, increasing to very large numbers in the thirteenth Dynasty. It was on such an occasion that Abraham and Sarah visited Upper Egypt—as we find recorded in Genesis, xii. 10: the earliest notice of Egypt to be found in the Bible. They met numerous kinsmen in the seaports of the Delta, allied themselves with them and with the



COIN OF PTOLEMY SOTER.

Arabian tribes, who defeated the Pharaohs and conquered the whole of Lower Egypt. Tanis became their Capital and they ruled Northern Egypt for five centuries under the name of Hyksos. The defeated Pharaohs retired to Upper Egypt. The name Hyksos, according to Josephus and Manetho is taken from *hyk*, a king, and *sos*, a shepherd. These shepherd kings seem to have been of a Phoenician race. They did not put the conquered princes to death, but kept them in strict bondage and dependence.

This Middle Monarchy may be called the Second Period, beginning with Amenemhat, who is supposed to have descended in the female line from the ancient kings. These the Hyksos subdued.

In the seventeenth Dynasty the Capital was placed at Karba, the modern Sân, supposed to be the Zoan mentioned in the Bible. This Karba was built in the fertile plains of the Delta, and judging by the present ruins seems to have been a magnificent town, full of palatial residences built of rare and costly marbles.

It was under one of these kings that Joseph went down into Egypt. The alien kings showed wisdom and adaptation in keeping up the manners and customs already established there. The religion, the arts, the language and the writing of the country they adopted ; nothing was changed. The descendants of the ancient Egyptians became their servitors. At one period a great famine spread death and desolation over the whole land—probably the famine spoken of in the Bible, in which Joseph took so prominent a part. According to Dr. Brugsch, Joseph went down into Egypt in the year B.C. 1730, during the reign of the Pharaoh Nubti.

The decline of the middle period was distinguished by great kings and mighty deeds.



COIN OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

Meneptah I. carried his victorious army far into Asia. He was one of the most lavish and magnificent of all the monarchs. Amongst other great works, he made the first canal between the Red Sea and the Nile ; beginning that long series of enterprises stretching down from the year 1385 B.C. to our own times, and terminating with the great Suez Canal. His tomb at Thebes is the most remarkable of all the tombs of the kings ; and at Karnak, Koorneh and Abydos many monuments testify to the splendour of his reign.

Next came Rameses the Great, the legendary Sesostris of the Greek historians, who reigned for sixty-seven years.

Of his conquests there seems to have been no end. His magnificence was also unparalleled ; he was sumptuous in all his ideas, and at the same time large-minded and valiant. A great conqueror, he added to

the prosperity, if not the peace and repose, of Egypt. Many ruins now existing are the remains of palaces and temples built during his reign. His energy was so great that he seemed compelled to seek every possible occasion and outlet for its prosecution. Many memorials of his deeds and victories exist. Almost every great monument of Egypt records his name. He extended his victories south to Donkola, north to Asia Minor, east to the Tigris, and erected monuments in all the conquered countries. He was a great patron of all the arts and sciences, erected the Ramesseum at Thebes and presented it with a library. Poetry flourished during his reign. Yet his heart must have been hard, for it was he who oppressed the Israelites. For long he was considered the greatest conqueror, the most illustrious monarch of ancient Egypt. It is now supposed that his conquests were exaggerated ; that a portion of the victories and glories for which he has obtained sole credit were due to Thothmes III., his predecessor, and Menepkah II. and Rameses III., his immediate successors. It is said that he caused many of the crests or bearings of his predecessors to be effaced upon the various monuments, and substituted for them his own. He appears to have had great difficulty in maintaining the integrity of his empire during his long reign.

The chief feature of interest in the reign of his successor, Menepkah II., was the Exodus of the Children of Israel.

How vividly the scene comes before us. The black darkness of the night, relieved only by the silent stars above, pledges of the Eternal Wisdom who calleth them all by their names and guideth all things earthly. A great concourse of people, dressed for a long journey, with staff in hand and head covered. The mystery attending the unknown future, the plunge into a desert waste, hitherto untrodden by their feet. The sadness of leaving familiar spots and scenes behind them, beloved in spite of their grievous bondage. The spoiling of the Egyptians, subdued and terrified by the plagues which had only hardened the heart of Pharaoh. The first moments of that wonderful Exodus, under the earthly guidance of Moses, the Heavenly direction of the Pillar of Fire ; followed by that record without parallel, the forty years' wandering in the wilderness.

It was during the reign of Menepkah II. that the termination of a Sothis period was celebrated. Sothis was their name for Sirius, or the Dog Star, and his course in the heavens was their guidance in fixing the exact astronomical year. The Egyptians, as we know, were great astronomers. They seem, indeed, to have been great in all abstruse sciences, for what can be more wonderful than the precision, the astounding mathematical calculations employed in building the Pyramids ?

They had their " wise men " also, in those days, whether they came from Egypt or from some neighbouring country ; for we are told that wise men came to worship the Infant Saviour and to present Him

their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, "having seen His star in the East."

These wise men must have been soothsayers or astrologers, and this passing mention of them in the Bible seems to give countenance to their profession, and to prove yet once more that there are more things in Heaven and earth than we dream of in our philosophy.



ON THE NILE.

In this our own day we laugh to scorn the science of the stars; alchemy, magic, necromancy, all the occult sciences, we hold as the work of imposture ; and perhaps very properly so. But the "wise men" of those days were evidently not impostors. If their imagination occasionally carried them further than their revelation, there was undoubtedly a large substratum of truth in what they said and did. "Where is He that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen His star in the East and are come to worship Him ?" This knowledge they evidently gained from their science ; it was not a direct message from Heaven. No angels

appeared to the wise men as they did to the simple shepherds watching their flocks by night. And what a vision must that have been to those quiet watchers ! What celestial harmonies must have gone ringing through the spheres, perhaps are echoing still in the far-off spaces that have neither circumference nor centre. "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill towards men !" a message that may well echo and re-echo through the everlasting realms until time shall be no more and the glory of the First Advent shall be swallowed up in the fulfilment of the Second.

The wise men were not simple shepherds and no angel was needed to announce the consummation of the great mystery upon which all our future hopes depend : the fact that God had become reconciled to man. The knowledge came to them through their dark science ; possibly they had foreseen it for years, waited for it for years, and at last must have read with strange emotion what they had so long anticipated. That they recognised the stupendous and eternal consequences of the event seems undoubted from their gifts and worship ; and this again would almost seem to suggest something of revelation with their scientific or astrological labours.

Nor is this to be wondered at. In those days they were nearer to the eternal and the unseen than we are in these. The Almighty had not then, as now, completely withdrawn all manifestations of Himself and His Presence. We have to walk solely by faith, but sight was also accorded to the ancients. As we have more internal evidence, so they needed more external. The Holy Spirit had not been sent forth upon the earth "to bear witness with our spirit ;" we have "the evidence in ourselves ;" they had not. The Messiah had not yet come ; they were still aliens, living only in hope of that promise which to us has been fulfilled and has borne its fruit for nearly two thousand years. Those were the days of mighty manifestations ; of lightnings and thunderings ; of tremblings of the earth that were not earthquakes ; of furious winds ; of prophecyings and miracles ; of wars when the LORD OF HOSTS went forth with the armies, and they were victorious because His Presence went with them. Yet His voice was not heard in all these mighty manifestations. He spoke to Moses then as he speaks individually to mankind now : in the "still, small voice ;" audible to Moses, but to us only heard as the voice of Conscience.

And it is, we repeat once more, because Egypt has been the scene of so many of these events which will leave their mark upon time and upon eternity, that it is to us so supremely interesting a country ; surrounded by a sacred halo which has shed its light abroad upon all mankind ; so that, paradoxical as it may seem, from this most superstitious of lands has come forth a radiance that has done much to dissipate the superstition of the world.

It was at the close of the Second Period that one of the great tragedies was taking place which gave rise to so many symbols of the great plan of Redemption : such as the Eating of the Passover, the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness, and much more. Rameses II. oppressed the Israelites until their lives became a burden to themselves. He bid them make bricks without straw ; he employed them in building many of his great monuments ; in every possible way he tyrannised over them. But he died, and Menephtah, another King arose in his stead, and yet more hardened his heart against the Children of Israel. To him and his land came the Ten Plagues of Egypt ; to him Moses said, "Thou shalt see my face no more." Immediately after which came the Exodus.

The Sothis, or Dog-Star, to which we have alluded (the most beautiful star in the heavens then, as now), by his course gave the Egyptians their means of reckoning the true astronomical year. Their first year began with the early rising of the star, at the beginning of the overflowing of the Nile. But with them, as in our own calculation, the Egyptian solar year was six hours shorter than the Sothis or astronomical year. Thus they soon got out of their reckoning. At the end of forty years the solar year fell short of the Sothis year by ten days, the difference widening as the years went on, displacing the dates of their great festivals, which fell at periods to which they did not belong. After fourteen hundred and sixty years the error corrected itself, and the new year corresponded with the rising of the Sothis. We have leap year to balance our own calculations.

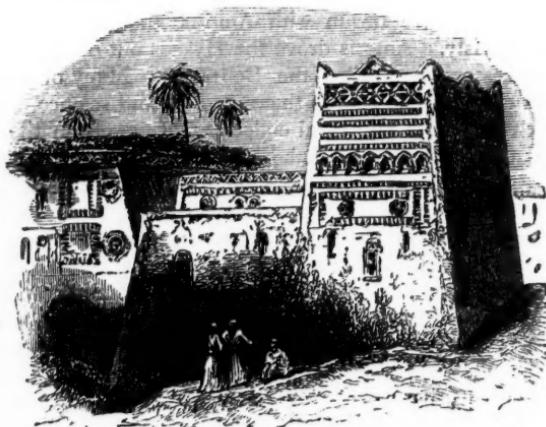
The Third Period dates from about the year 1700 to 1000 B.C.

It appears to have begun with Amosis, the first king of the eighteenth Dynasty. Amosis drove the Hyksos out of Egypt, and he and his successors were called the Deliverers. Many of the finest monuments existing were due to them, and art and science flourished under their rule. The wonderful collection of jewels in the Boulak Museum at Cairo belonged to Aah-hotep, the queen who immediately preceded Amosis. Amongst the monuments erected by the Deliverers are, the Temple of Hatasoo ; the obelisk in the Temple of Karnak, the highest in the world, raised by Dayr-el-Bahree to the memory of her father, Thothmes I. ; the quarries at Silsilis ; the rock tombs in the Theban Mountains ; part of the Temple of Karnak ; the gigantic figures of Amenhotep III. in the Plain of Thebes, which stand out against the background of sky like mighty and mysterious creations, as the sun sinks westward and the almost momentary twilight spreads its mantle over the earth. It was an age of poetry, too, and a hymn on granite, now in the Boulak Museum, reminds one of the lofty strains of the Song of Moses, which was not written for three hundred years later. This similarity might almost suggest that the Hebrews, who gained much from the Egyptians, may possibly have been influenced by them in the style of their verse.

Egypt at this period reached its highest point of prosperity. All the countries bordering the Mediterranean belonged to them ; at no time were more magnificent buildings erected, and one of the obelisks belonging to this period is now in London.

As we have seen, the reigns of Rameses I. and Sethi I. were much occupied in repressing an Asiatic invasion. Under Rameses II. came the bondage of the Israelites. Under Menepkah came the Exodus ; and his tomb may be seen at Bab-el-Molook. Under the kings reigning between Rameses II. and Rameses III. the country declined, but the latter restored it to its former glory. The history of his reign is recorded in the Harris papyrus now in the British Museum. This long line of monarchs terminated with Rameses XVI., after which came a series of revolutions.

Then came more changes in the country. New dynasties arose, commencing with the Tanite, founded by a high priest of the god Amen. The Assyrians put an end to it, and gave rise to the Bubastite Dynasty. Shashank I. captured and pillaged Jerusalem. He is mentioned in the Bible as Shishak, and we find the record in the 1st Kings, chap. 14 : and the 2 Chron., chap. 12. Soon after this came the Ethiopians, who had been gradually making way in the South of Egypt as the Assyrians in the North. They continued for a time, but Egypt was again invaded by the Assyrians under Esar-haddon, who finally triumphed and conquered Egypt after many repulses. He divided the country into twelve provinces, appointing a governor to each province, by one of whom the Saite or next dynasty was founded.



SHEIKH'S HOUSE.

The Greeks now settled in Egypt for the first time. During this dynasty Zedekiah was besieged in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Nahbra, the Egyptian, went to Zedekiah's assistance, but afterwards sided with the Babylonians, who put an end to the kingdom of Judaea.

The most splendid reign of this dynasty was that of Aahmes, who restored to Egypt some of her ancient splendour. The Persian Empire was founded by Cyrus, whose son Cambyses invaded Egypt, was successful at the Battle of Pelusium, and subdued the country.

From this moment some of the charms of antiquity, much of the halo and glamour, the romance and mystery surrounding the pure Egyptians, disappear. Five centuries still have to rise and set before the Christian Era ; but Egypt seems to be in touch with the newer world when, under Cambyses, it becomes a province of the Persian Empire.

True it was only exchanging one form of romance for another, or, rather, adding romance to romance, for Persia has been ever associated with everything that is magnificent and gorgeous. A land of fervid imagination, the pride of wealth, the pomp of luxury, everything that is glowing and picturesque; a land of roses and rich wines and sumptuous feasts: a land which went forth conquering and to conquer, subduing kingdoms, annexing provinces and turning its own small empire into a mighty power. A land full of poetry and rich imagery, yielding the palm only to the yet more imaginative Arabians. Such was Persia.

So with the conquest of Egypt by Persia, the Lotus Land seems to approach a very sensible step nearer to our own times; we appear to realise her more, are more in touch with her. The feeling may be partly the effect of fancy and imagination, but it is no less real in its influence.

The Persians began the Fourth Period and the twenty-seventh Dynasty. Amyrtæus was sole king of the twenty-eighth Dynasty, and in his reign Herodotus, the father of historians, to whom we owe so much that is now known, visited Egypt. In one of the succeeding reigns Plato also visited Egypt as an oil-merchant. Then came Alexander the Great, who gave the final blow to the Egyptian independence.

Nekho, one of the kings of the twenty-sixth Dynasty, was a domestic king. In his day the extremity of South Africa was first navigated, and he began to construct a canal from the Nile to the Red Sea, but did not finish the work because an oracle declared that it would only benefit strangers. He marched in his time against Assyria and defeated Josiah, King of Judah, at Megiddo. At this period Ninevah fell, Assyria was divided, Nekho was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, at Karkemish and had to give up his possessions in Syria and Palestine. Nebuchadnezzar besieged and took Jerusa'lem. Then arose Belshazzar, King of Babylon, who gave himself up to luxury and pleasure, until, at a great feast, he was suddenly startled by the Handwriting upon the wall, of which Daniel became the interpreter. In that night his kingdom was taken from him by Cyrus, founder of the Persian Empire. After the capture of Babylon and Lydia, Egypt became sole rival of the new and great Persian Empire, and when she was annexed to Persia by the victories of Cambyses, Persia practically ruled the world.

The Persian dominion began with the twenty-eighth Dynasty, and lasted with greater or less interruption, until Darius III. was conquered by Alexander the Great. The Egyptians hailed Alexander as their deliverer from the yoke of the Persians, which they had ever looked upon as bondage of the hardest description during the whole two hundred years that it lasted. Alexander did much for Egypt, his greatest domestic act being the founding of Alexandria, which became

the great centre and representative of Greek learning, and the key-stone to the commerce of the whole world.

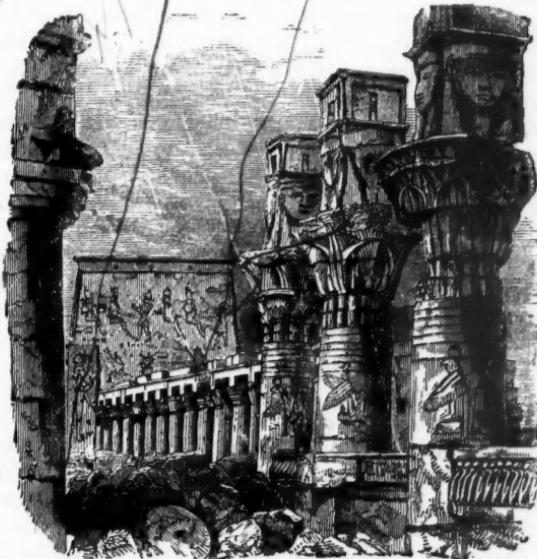
Upon the death of Alexander rose the Period of the Ptolemies. They began their reign with everything in their favour : wealth, commerce, possessions, all were theirs. The Alexandrian museum was founded for the benefit of learned men and for the reception of literary treasures. Athens had hitherto been the recognised seat of learning and culture ; now this honour fell to Alexandria. The museum contained an immense library, of which the commencement had been a small collection left by Aristotle. This rose, in the time of Ptolemy Philadephus, to four hundred thousand volumes ; and in the time of Cæsar, when it was burned, to nine hundred thousand.

The Serapeum was also built under the Ptolemies, and stood near Pompey's Pillar. This was the great temple of Serapis, a god introduced by the Ptolemies, who wished the Greeks and Egyptians to possess a deity they might worship in common. The Greeks called him Pluto, the Egyptians Osiris-Apis ; and they looked upon him as the god of the infernal regions. By the Egyptians he was transformed into a new divinity, with rites to suit their own form of worship. The Apis bull, down to a very late period, was chiefly worshipped at Memphis.

The Serapeum, when finished, was only surpassed in grandeur and magnificence by the Roman Capitol. It stood at the west end of Alexandria, near the Necropolis, and was approached on one side by a lofty flight of steps, leading to a platform and a vaulted roof supported by four columns. The Colonnades contained different chambers set apart for the worship of Apis ; and, at one period, a library of three hundred thousand volumes. The walls of the Colonades were gorgeously painted, the ceiling and capitals were gilded. The whole effect was one of dazzling splendour. The god Apis had been brought by Ptolemy Soter, from Sinope on the Pontus, the Sinopeans at first refusing to part with it. After three years the image is said to have transported itself on board a vessel, and to have miraculously arrived at Alexandria in three days. This wooden image, overlaid with precious metals, was placed within the sanctuary of the temple, an opening in the roof causing rays of sunlight to fall upon the mouth of the image : an effect adopted in the present day in some of the Roman Catholic churches abroad. Most of the images of Apis are of dark stone. It has been said that that of Alexandria was of emerald. Cerberus lay at its feet, with the heads of a wolf, a lion and a dog, entwined with a serpent—emblems of sagacity, strength, watchfulness and wisdom.

The Ptolemies found Egypt in the full flow of prosperity ; but as time went on, the kings degenerated ; many of them were cruel and self-indulgent, and the country suffered. At length, fifty-two years before the Christian Era, arose the Great Cleopatra (though we cannot say Cleopatra the Great), seventh of her name. She was

the daughter of Auletes, the "flute-player," who had been established upon the throne by the Roman power. He left his eldest children, Cleopatra and Dionysus, joint heirs; but very soon Dionysus, afraid of Cleopatra, banished her from the kingdom. Pompey being defeated by Cæsar at the battle of Pharsalia, fled to Egypt, hoping to find refuge with Dionysus, of whom he was guardian. As soon as he landed, the latter caused him to be put to death. Then Cæsar invaded Alexandria on behalf of Cleopatra, and defeated Ptolemy, who was drowned in the Nile. Cæsar appointed Cleopatra's next brother to reign with her, but she, perhaps afraid of a second banishment, caused him to be put to death; after which Cæsar himself was



ANCIENT TEMPLE OF ISIS.

murdered. Then came the summons to Cleopatra from Antony to repair to Tarsus and answer for her misdeeds. Antony, we know, fell a victim to her charms, after which came nine years of such magnificent self-indulgence as the world had never seen before, has never seen since, ending in sad and disastrous suicide for the unhappy pair.

Upon this the Greek element disappeared from Egypt, and the country became a Roman province. The Roman power existed four hundred and twenty-six years, beginning with Augustus and ending with Theodosius the Great.

In the reign of Tiberius, when all the world was at peace and the Temple of Janus was closed, came the fulfilment of the long-looked-for prophecy—the birth of the Saviour.

Henceforth all was changed ; a new religious era had set in, which was to alter the face of the globe, the character of mankind. Yet it was to bring, not peace, but a sword upon the earth for many a generation, many a century.

In the year A.D. 55, in the reign of Nero, Christianity is said to have been introduced into Egypt by St. Mark, twenty-two years after he had witnessed the death and resurrection and ascension of our Lord in Jerusalem. Henceforth the Christians were to be persecuted for their faith, and the great army of Christian Martyrs commenced. In the year 323 Constantine the Great summoned the Council of Nice, where the doctrines of Christianity were confirmed, and the Nicene Creed was compiled, with the help of Athanasius, a deacon of Alexandria. Constantine was himself a Christian, and freed all the Christians from oppression and persecution. The blood of the martyrs ceased to flow, and for a time there was a great religious calm. In the year 379 Theodosius I. went further than Constantine, and proclaimed Christianity as the religion of the empire, making all else unlawful. From that time all were to be Christians ; Paganism was to be abolished. The Serapeum at Alexandria was destroyed, together with every smaller heathen temple, every image of wood and stone : and their name was legion. Not only in Alexandria, but in every town of Egypt was the work of destruction carried on ; in every house, in the open fields, on the banks of the Nile, and even in the desert plains, every symbol of idolatry was commanded to be destroyed.

From this period dates also the downfall of Egyptian science : as if this had been so mixed up with idolatry and superstition that the birth of a more wholesome era was its own death-blow. The secret of their writings, the key to the hieroglyphics and inscriptions were finally lost, and for fourteen hundred years remained buried in the most profound mystery and obscurity ; until the discovery of the Rosetta Stone, and the researches and labours of Champollion, the great French Egyptologist, once more brought to light the secret which had baffled all previous scientific research.

The Christian period lasted for two hundred and forty-three years, when Egypt fell under the Arabian conquerors and embraced their religion.

In the year 640 began the Mohammedan period under the Caliphs. Egypt soon became the headquarters of Islam. This was the Sixth Period in the history of Egypt and lasted from 640 to 1517. Immense social, political and religious changes took place. On the one hand much that was erroneous and to be deplored spread over the length and breadth of the land ; on the other hand, a great deal that was good and lasting was effected. Multitudes of the people accepted the new faith, which possessed many elements that appealed to their lower natures and was less self-sacrificing and self-denying than the pure religion of Christ. The Christians who remained true

to their creed were called Copts, as they are to this day. Very soon they became subject to persecutions, which continued for many centuries.

The Arabian dominion in Egypt created a revolution in many things. Fanaticism was the leading trait of the Mohammedans, as it ever is in all whose religion is founded upon error, idolatry, or superstition. From the lips of only ONE Regenerator have we received the Divine assurance : I WILL HAVE MERCY AND NOT SACRIFICE.

The Mohammedans brought their fanaticism to bear upon everything they did. When their rule was over they had left their indelible mark upon the country. They extended the arts and sciences, bringing to the former an immense amount of gorgeous and elaborate detail and a great degree of refinement. They had carried the art of metallic engraving, of damascened and inlaid work, to perfection ; their pottery was famous for its wonderful glazes, their stained glass for the brilliancy of its colours, their embroideries for the fineness of their work and material. Their vivid imaginations delighted in everything that was gorgeous in colouring, yet vulgarity was unknown. It was their pleasure to live in a rainbow atmosphere, but so harmonious that colour blended with colour and the result was an enchanting effect. Their architecture was florid and ornate, appealing to the senses. The pointed arch came into use ; sculpture, for which the Egyptians had been so famous, disappeared, but in minute carving they were pre-eminent. They had an unfailing capacity alike for broad outline and elaborate detail.

Under the Caliphs civilisation made great progress, yet was contradictory : refinement was mixed with barbarism, learning with intolerance and oppression.

It was an age of poetry, romance and music, toned and kept under by a love of pomp, magnificence and self-indulgence. Then, as now, they were distinguished by dignity of bearing, an effect partly due to their flowing garments, partly to an innate grandeur of mind. It was the age of mosques and minarets ; an age which left the Tombs of the Caliphs as a legacy to the world : magnificent monuments that give so distinctive a character to this Lotus Land, but that seem, like so much else, to be falling into ruin and decay. Ali that is charming to the eye and enchanting to the imagination is fast disappearing from Egypt ; and as the banks of the Nile are crowded with the ruins of "gorgeous palaces and cloud-capp'd towers," that existed for long ages before the dawn of Christianity, so it is much to be feared will the interest surrounding Cairo one day be of this mournful character. Many a Caliph's tomb, many a mosque and minaret will be known only as a tradition of the past.

To the Mohammedan succeeded the Turkish rule in Egypt, in the sixteenth century. It was productive of no great change, of no important event. This was the Seventh Period.

In the Turkish element we come upon an influence that has rarely

been great or wholesome. In the lands over which they have ruled they have seldom left traces for good or any lasting impression. Turkey itself would long since have disappeared but for strong allies who have kept her from the enemy. When Turkey went to war with Russia in 1771, Ali Bey, an Arab prince, took possession of Egypt, but in 1798 Napoleon invaded Egypt, defeated the Mamelukes near the Pyramids and took possession of Cairo. Nelson next fought the Battle of the Nile, and destroyed the French fleet, and Napoleon fled back to France. In 1801 Abercromby fought and won the battle of Alexandria. In 1811 the power of Mohammed Ali was finally established by the murder of Mameluke Beys to the number of four hundred and seventy in the Citadel of Cairo.

If Mohammed Ali was unscrupulous, he was also brave, daring and determined ; he possessed great tact and wisdom, the power of governing, the ability to command and to make himself obeyed. He had the welfare of Egypt at heart, and was hailed by the Egyptians as another deliverer. He made great alterations, established great reforms. Under his rule the country grew in wealth and prosperity. In 1831, hoping to gain the complete independence of Egypt, he declared war against Turkey, and would probably have succeeded—for he was born under a propitious star—had not the European powers gone against him. In 1841, the viceroyalty was made hereditary in his family. Mohammed Tewfik, who has just died, was the great grandson of Mohammed Ali. In 1866, the title of Khedive was given to the viceroys, Ismail Pasha being the first to bear it.

At the present moment, Egypt is not in a very flourishing condition. Her past magnificence and expenditure have brought her into a state of partial bankruptcy. She has had to borrow from other countries, and has not always met her liabilities. From all this she will probably one day arise and shake herself free. If Wisdom becomes her watchword, she possesses sufficient internal resources to take her place once more, in the course of time, amongst the important and respected nations of the world. Let her see to it, for it chiefly depends upon herself. For the present, perhaps happily, she is not quite free to do as she pleases. The English occupation of Egypt leaves her very much in the condition of a subdued power ; but let England also see that she uses her influence well and controls her acts with discretion. The race is to the swift and the battle to the strong, only when wisdom waits upon the footsteps of power. Only when the LORD OF HOSTS went forth with the armies of Israel were they victorious : and in these days, however much men may slight the lessons that have come down to us from the Past, none will escape shipwreck who trust to their own strength and lightly esteem the Divine ordering of the universe.

## FOR FATHER'S SAKE.

BY LADY DUNBOYNE.

"SO that is Colonel Ainslie—the hero of whom we have heard and read so much!" said one of the elder ladies who were looking on at a tennis match in the Rectory grounds at West Moor. "Well! I had expected to think him plain, but scarcely so—so almost repulsively ugly as he really is. Not even a good figure to redeem that frightful face—surely one eye is nearly closed just above the scar?"

"Ah!" said the Rector with his quiet smile, "the comrade whom he saved from the Zulu assegais has had good cause to bless that scar. Poor old Jack Ainslie had a near shave for it that time, and the Victoria Cross, even, is a poor exchange for half one's sight. He is one of the finest fellows that ever lived, and I defy even you, Mrs. Russell, to think him ugly after he has talked to you for five minutes in that pleasant voice of his, the only attraction he ever possessed."

"What brings him to West Moor?"

"Partly the fact of his being a distant cousin of my wife's—no, you need not apologise for your criticism; we all know Jack's personal shortcomings, and no one is better aware of them than himself—and partly his wish to look up an old friend and brother officer to whom he was formerly much attached—Captain Wingfield."

"The father of pretty little Madge? I see her over yonder, playing tennis with Charlie Fullerton as usual. I hope there is nothing in *that*; it would be too silly, when neither has a penny."

"Oh! they are only old chums and playfellows; boys never fall in love with the little tots they have known from babyhood."

"I am not quite sure of that, when the tots grow up so distractingly pretty, with yellow-gold hair and forget-me-not coloured eyes—really Madge has a face that would drive an artist distracted—but after all I believe her safety lies in the fact of thinking no one equal to her father. I don't know Captain Wingfield myself, but I like to ask the child after him, for the sake of seeing her sweet little face light up. But you look grave; is he not so well?"

"I fear there is sore trouble in store for Madge's tender little heart," said the Rector evasively, and the next minute he made his escape to where his friend and guest was standing with folded arms, quietly watching the gay scene.

"Much bored, Ainslie? Don't stand on ceremony; go off and have a quiet pipe whenever you get tired of our frivolities."

"Thanks, old fellow, but I am doing very well. I've been away from civilised society so long, what with India and that shooting trip to the Rockies since I gave up the service, that it rather amuses me

to take up the threads again. By-the-bye, Everett, I think I have discovered the young lady whom you promised to show me to-day. At least she is a striking likeness of my dear old handsome chum, Val Wingfield." He pointed out a lady of some five-and-twenty years, or possibly more, tall and slender, with a certain quiet stateliness in her very plain dress and thick plaits of golden-brown hair. "She has Val's profile exactly and, when she speaks, his very expression—and yet I am puzzled——"

"I should think so!" laughed the Rector. "Where has your memory gone wool-gathering, Ainsley? That is Christine Wingfield, niece to your old friend, and only down in these parts for a short visit. Little Madge is seven years younger than her cousin, as you ought to know, for you were her godfather (though represented by proxy) when I christened her eighteen years ago. That is she, whose splendid serving they are applauding over yonder—our queen of the tennis ground, especially when she has Charley Fullerton as partner. Poor little girl! I fear her days of gaiety are numbered! If all one hears be true, poor Wingfield will not be able to keep on his place much longer."

"Why so?"

"He has had heavy losses. He never was a prudent man, and since his wife's death things have just been allowed to slide. One or two speculations into which he was drawn have turned out badly, and yesterday I heard to my great dismay that the —— Bank, in which most of we —— shire folks are interested, is very shaky. I have only a few hundreds in it, but poor Wingfield is a large shareholder. Should it fail, there will be very little but ruin before him and poor little Madge. Christine has barely enough to live on herself—she boards with some old friends in town, and spends her time in writing for the magazines, laying out her earnings in charity. I have no doubt that whenever the crash does come, the good girl will devote herself to doing all she can—more than she can, indeed—to spare her uncle and the little one. The two girls are very tenderly attached."

It seemed so, indeed, for the tennis match ended at this moment, and Madge, bright and flushed with victory, ran up to her cousin, whose grave sweet face lighted up with smiles of response.

The Rector crossed over to them. "Madge, I have brought you an old friend—one of whom you have heard your father speak—Colonel Ainslie. Christine, I think you, too, must have heard of him, in his public character at all events."

Both girls turned, but Christine's quiet greeting was lost in the younger one's eager cry of welcome. "Oh, how glad my father will be! he has talked of you so often, and wondered if he would ever see you again! Ah! we know you well—have known you for years, dear godfather! have we not Chrissie?" turning in her child-like, impulsive way to her cousin, whose assent was signified only by a smile.

"And now tell me of him—tell me of my dear old friend," said Colonel Ainslie, a few minutes later, when, Christine having slipped away on some pretext, he paced the shady, rose-bordered walks along with Madge. "I have so much to hear, for it is long, long since we shook each other by the hand, vowing that neither time nor space should ever break the brother-like tie between us. Ah, child you don't know what your father was to me, when I joined the old regiment, a raw subaltern, twenty seven years ago. Shy, ugly, awkward and homesick, you can scarcely imagine a more miserable specimen of humanity. And then *he* took me up—Val Wingfield—the most popular youngster of them all, the handsomest, the most sought after. There were only a few years between us, and I always looked older than I was. The fellows nick-named us Valentine and Orson, and we were like brothers until that day—a sad one to me—when your father gave up soldiering to marry. We have never met since, for I was constantly away on foreign service; latterly in various posts of command; and on the only occasion of my spending any time in England your father was travelling in the Riviera on account of your mother's health. Since I returned this time, I have heard that you have lost her; nay, my child, I did not mean to distress you; it is like my old bearish clumsiness."

"No, no," said Madge, struggling to speak calmly, "it is not that; not your fault in any way; only I was thinking of father—oh! how glad he will be to see you! Dear, dear father! but he is very ill, so much changed even in the last few years, and perhaps *you* will hardly know him. He has had troubles," her voice faltered again, and Ainslie pressed the little hand that rested confidingly within his arm.

"And when may I come?" he asked. "My time here may be short. I have the offer of an appointment at the Horse-guards, and may have to go up to London soon."

"Oh come to-night!" cried Madge; then hesitating: "that is, if you will not mind. The house is not so very small, but we have only a part of it furnished now," she broke off, hearing Christine's quiet voice at her elbow. "Madge dear, I am going home with Mrs. Russell, she wants me to stay a few days, and will send over for my things. Will you not take Colonel Ainslie back with you to see Uncle Val? And my room will be all ready," she added in a lower voice.

That evening, long after Madge had gone to her room, the two old brother officers sat smoking in Captain Wingfield's snugger, striving with more or less success to bridge over with friendly recollections the long gulf of years, during which they had been parted.

They were a strange contrast—Valentine Wingfield with his delicate, handsome features—sharpened yet more by ill-health and the seclusion of his recent life—scholar and scientist now, rather than soldier, and feeling himself on unfamiliar ground as he talked the long-forgotten language of the past—and Jack Ainslie, sturdy, bronzed,

weather-beaten, almost repulsively ugly, as Mrs. Russell had said, ungainly in figure, yet withal a soldier every inch of him, with the ring of command in his frank, kindly voice, and a certain air of distinction and self-reliance common to those who have had the lives and safety of other human creatures in their keeping. Sadly now he was looking at the wreck before him of all he had once thought brightest and noblest in manhood—at Val Wingfield, as he sat leaning back in his chair and speaking of the ruin which seemed about to overwhelm him and his child.

"If I could have died here in peace and seen Madge provided for, I should be content," was the hopeless, oft-repeated burden of his song; and with vain efforts to cheer him and infuse a little hopefulness into the broken-down spirit, Ainsley at length left him for the night.

For himself sleep seemed impossible; he tossed about hopelessly till early dawn, and then rose in accordance with his Indian habits, and went out to soothe and cool his brain in the garden, all beautiful and fragrant in the dewy freshness of a June morning. He strolled about till eight o'clock, when he saw the postman come and go with little interest, knowing that his own letters, if any, would be left at the Rectory.

Presently, however, an unusual confusion seemed to be taking place in the house. Madge's face appeared for a moment at the window—flushed, tear-stained—changed from the flower-like loveliness of last night.

A maid came running out to summon the boy who looked after the only occupant of the stable, and Ainslie caught the word "doctor," in the hurried colloquy which took place.

"Is Captain Wingfield ill?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," answered the cook—evidently an old and privileged servant—"he's took very bad, is poor master, and no wonder! getting bad news so sudden, when the doctor said, above all things, shocks was to be avoided."

"Bad news!" Colonel Ainslie hesitated—he shrank from prying into his friend's affairs at such a moment, and would not question the garrulous cook. "Please ask Miss Madge if I may see her for a moment," he added quickly. "I will not detain her from her father's room."

She came to him, looking more child-like even than on the previous evening, her blue eyes clouded with trouble, her mouth quivering. "Poor child," he said, taking the two little hands in his kind, strong grasp; "what is it?"

"The bank has failed," said Madge piteously, "and we are ruined! I should not care except for father. But it will kill him to go away from here, and go we must: there is nothing left, except my mother's two thousand pounds! We must go to Boulogne or somewhere and live on that, he says! Oh my poor father! he did so love this place, our little home, where mamma is buried."

A strange wild impulse flashed into Ainslie's mind as the pretty creature stood sobbing before him. He had always been an impetuous man, and a hater of the prudent saying, "second thoughts are best." "Madge," he held her hands tighter and tried to look into her face, "if a way could be found to save your father—to spare him the pain of leaving his home—would you give your help towards it, even if some effort, some sacrifice were required?"

"I would do *anything* for father's sake," she said, looking straight at him with her innocent eyes. "Oh! tell me what way there is—"

"Not now, not yet," he dropped her hands with a pitying, half-sad smile on his kind face. "Go, dear, and ask your father if I may come to him. He will not mind seeing his old friend Jack. We have stood by one another in many a boyish trouble."

A week later, and little Madge was betrothed to her father's friend. It seemed like a dream: she still called him "Godfather," and nothing in their relative positions seemed changed.

The girl scarcely knew whether she was happy or not; she was only conscious of a sense of relief and restfulness, for her father was brighter than she had seen him for years, in the three-fold joy of having his old friend restored, his home saved and his child provided for. For every penny of his moderate fortune had Colonel Ainslie settled on his fair young bride; much of it, indeed, had been sunk in the purchase of the house and estate so dear to her father. He had inherited it, mortgaged and encumbered, some years before, and had loved it as a haven of rest after a chequered life of trial. To think of it as belonging to Madge and her children in the future, was to him a never-ending source of delight.

And Colonel Ainslie himself?

He treated his beautiful little betrothed as something too delicate and fragile for every-day life, and never looked at her without feeling it, as he said, something like sacrilege to show his ugly face beside that little angel's.

"I've always wanted something to pet and take care of, but I never dreamed of such a dainty piece of Dresden china for my very own," he said one evening, fondly stroking her yellow locks. "Are you sure, my darling, that you don't repent? Think of having to go through life with my gorilla-face always in the foreground."

"Don't call yourself ugly names," and Madge's soft little hand touched his lips. "Besides, if you were ten times more horrid than you make out, should I not love you and be grateful to you for making my father so happy? And I need never leave him, need I? This will be his home always?"

"Always, little Madge, please God." But he sighed; it was to be "father's" home; did she care at all that it should be his also?

"He is so good, Chrissie—so generous; and my father loves him so much," was all she would say, when her cousin spoke to her in her

tender, almost motherly way, of her new prospects. And Christine sighed. What did this simple, childish creature know of the depths of the great heart she had won?

The weeks rolled on, and the corn ripened in the fields, and fruit mellowed on the trees, and September would soon be come; and with it Madge's wedding day.

Only three days more now—and Colonel Ainslie, who had been in London to hurry on the completion of settlements, was walking across the fields to Woodleigh from the Rectory, where, pending the wedding, his headquarters were fixed. He had reached the stile where he half expected to meet Madge, and already his lips were forming themselves into the whistle which was his usual signal, when he became aware of voices near him.

The speakers were hidden from him, but his ears were quick to recognise Madge's sweet tones.

The deeper voice of her companion puzzled him at first—half involuntarily he drew back, and concealed himself behind a bryony-wreathed hedge. As he did so these words smote his ear.

"Madge—Madge, how could you do it? I was away from home—I knew nothing until my people wrote me word two days ago, and I thought the news would have killed me. Child, were you blind, or have you no heart? Did you not know that I was waiting—working—slaving for you—my one hope and guiding-star? I have loved you longer than I can remember, and you have loved me too—you can not deny it—it has grown with our growth—been part of our very selves——"

"Charlie, Charlie!" How different were the agitated tones from the cool, gentle accents Ainslie was accustomed to hear. "Don't be cruel—it is too late now—yes, quite too late. I did not know what I was doing—I don't think I knew how it would part you and me for ever. It was for father's sake——" A burst of tears here choked her utterance.

The hand of the unseen listener clenched itself tightly on the bough he held, unconscious of the thorns that were tearing glove and flesh alike. He stood there spell-bound, unable by word or sign to reveal his presence.

The pleading tones recommenced. "Charlie, you must help me to be brave—not make it harder. He is so kind and generous—it ought not to be so hard—and it was for father's sake—it has made him so happy."

"And you never once thought of me?" the young man said in bitter reproach. "Never gave one passing memory to the heart you had won and broken?"

"Dear Charlie, yes. When it was too late. I knew—Oh! I knew too well what I had done. But God will help us both, if we try to—to bear it—and do our duty——"

The poor little childish courage broke down once more, and the

young man—(Ah ! Ainslie could see his handsome face, and tall, athletic figure now, as he came closer) sprang forward and seized her hand. “Madge, my darling—my own little playfellow, give up this unnatural engagement—better repent now than when it is too late—”

“No, no, no,” she shrank back, almost passionately thrusting him from her—“Charlie—dear Charlie, I must not—I dare not listen——”

A moment later Ainslie could see her flitting homewards across the grass, and he had but just time to draw back and conceal himself, ere the young man, leaping impetuously over the style, strode back in another direction.

“Ah ! little Madge, could you not have trusted me ? Did you think I would accept such a sacrifice as this, even ‘for father’s sake?’ ”

“But you will forgive ! ” and in her terror the girl was almost kneeling at his feet. “Oh, godfather ! be patient with me a little while, and indeed, indeed I will try——”

“I know you would. See, my child, I am not angry ; I know how hard it has been and how loyally you have striven.”

“I did not know it when you spoke to me first ; it seemed to come upon me by degrees that it was giving up Charlie for ever. And now he—but oh ! it would be worse to break my father’s heart.”

“And you shall not. Do you think you are to have all the generosity on your side, little one ? I will explain all to your father, but in my own way. Marriage is not for me—old soldier and confirmed bachelor as I have been these forty-four years. And for your father—surely he need not scruple to accept the paltry gift of a few thousands from the man whose good genius he was in brighter days ! Nay, child, do not thank me—I am not sure that I can bear that—yet——”

Not till long afterwards did Ainslie realise to the full what he had done in giving away his patrimony.

For his immediate needs, his salary at the Horse-Guards amply sufficed, and in breaking off his engagement with Madge—the blame of which he took wholly upon himself—he imagined that he for ever put an end to his own thoughts or intentions of marriage.

He left the neighbourhood of West Moor as soon as he could do so without the appearance of a quarrel, and in due time heard from the Rector of Madge’s engagement to Charlie Fullerton, who, beginning life as a country solicitor, gave promise of being a rising man of some ability.

“Wingfield did not like it at first,” wrote the Rector, “and poor little Madge seemed out of spirits, but Charlie is a nice lad, and things are working round. I hope when they are really married we may see you down again in these parts, dear old chap.”

A few months later a chance meeting brought Colonel Ainslie and Christine Wingfield face to face.

From her he learned that her cousin was married, and her father not only reconciled, but well-pleased with his handsome son-in-law.

The months went by, and once more Ainslie was at Woodleigh, standing beside the grave of the friend for whom he had made the great sacrifice of his life.

And Madge was there, stunned and speechless in her grief, and clinging for support scarcely so much to her husband as to Christine, the strong, gentle woman, in whose very face and voice there was a sense of restfulness and calm.

Too late Jack Ainslie knew what he had done! In that grave of that dead friend lay buried the last hope of earthly happiness for him. No wife could ever be asked to share his poverty; no childish voice could cheer his lonely old age—he had taken up the burden with his eyes open and he must bear it to the end. “And it can make no difference,” he said to himself with a sad attempt at cheerfulness. “What woman would ever cast in her lot with such as I? One glance at the looking-glass ought to be a standing answer to that question.” But deep down in his heart was the knowledge that one woman—aye, and the fairest and noblest of his acquaintance, would accept his love with pride and joy, could he honestly dare to offer it.

“Godfather! dear godfather!”

It was the old childish appeal, and Madge’s two little hands were clasped in the old childish way round his sleeve.

“We want you to take it back—to let Charlie feel himself an honest man, and me a happy wife! Nay, you must not refuse—it is just and right. Your generous sacrifice bore its full fruit; *he* lived and died at the dear old house, just as you wished; and now it must be your own, as it ought to be. We have enough—ah! more than we need, since God took our little one to Himself; and the thought of having wronged you is ever a bitter thorn in Charlie’s heart. Take it back, dear godfather, and let him feel fit to shake your kind hand and meet your honest glance at last.”

And Ainslie took it back—almost against his will, and accepting it as an incubus at first, but gradually realising to what this was the opening of a door: and the little home became to him almost as dear as it had once been to poor Wingfield, from the day he brought Christine home as its mistress.

## OF CHEERFULNESS.

By A. H. JAPP, LL.D.

**T**HREE is no virtue that has been more celebrated by poets and novelists than cheerfulness. "Keep a cheerful frame of mind," says one, "for that is the sunshine that never fails : it will enrich others ; it will endow thee with the thousandfold reflection of thine own light from the faces of others which it hath already transfigured."

It is the root of constancy ; for there is no more shifty and unreliable person than your curmudgeon, who is the slave of his own caprices ; it is the best assurance of life, health and wealth ; it is the sign and evidence of a steady and energetic mind. It will make a fruitful youth, a happy manhood and a serene old age. It is the "open sesame" to many secrets which the discontented and peevish strive hard to discover but always miss ; it is the magic medium of friendship, if not even of love ; where there may be lack of special tastes and sympathies, cheerfulness will do much to supply their place. As water to the flower, so is cheerfulness to the mind. It keeps all green and sweet ; and sends forth a gracious savour that is imperceptible, but wins all by its perfume.

By cheerfulness a man's powers of work and production are doubled ; he has, as it were, taken in a set of working partners most ready to aid him in every task and enterprise. Cheerfulness keeps all the faculties in good condition, so that they are ever ready to do their utmost without strain.

Even from the lips of those who have failed to make the most of this virtue, we have the most earnest tributes to it. Witness Thomas Carlyle, who has devoted to it a few very fine passages in "Past and Present," and in "The Life of Schiller ;" while his letters attest a most lively appreciation of its value as a factor in life.

Goethe (from whom on these points Carlyle learned so much, though too often he failed practically to apply the lesson) has declared that "Cheerfulness is the mother of every virtue." All the most active men in the world's history—those who have achieved most, and acted most beneficially on their fellow-men—have been loud in praise of Cheerfulness. If one reads the early English dramatists one will find that, though they often erred and went too far, their ambition was to be ministers of cheerfulness, to promote generosity, good fellowship, social toleration in all directions. Certainly this is true of Shakespeare, of Dekker, of Middleton, of Ford and Ben Jonson. And here they are at one with the poets. We have the following from the sweet if somewhat tricky muse of Herrick :—

"In all thy need be thou posset  
Still with a well prepared breast ;

Nor let the shackles make thee sad :  
 Thou canst but have what others had.  
 And this for comfort thou must know :  
 Times that are ill won't still be so ;  
 Clouds will not ever pour down rain,  
 A sullen day will clear again ;  
 First peals of thunder we must hear,  
 Then lutes and harps shall strike the ear."

The dominating note of the Addisonian literature is a gracious, gregarious cheerfulness ; truth is robed, if not in motley, then in bright colours, and the sad facts of life are honestly set forth with a beaming smile. It was a rule of the house then to be quietly cheerful ; the pages of Steele and Goldsmith attest it as well as those of Addison and Johnson. The cheerfulness of the latter, indeed, considering his morbid bodily condition, is as remarkable as anything else about him, and his patient surrender of his own will in his own house in favour of a lot of nondescript pensioners, to whom he never spoke but cheerfully and kindly, is a proof that he practised as well as preached. Brave and kindly bluff old Samuel !

If cheerfulness, according to Solomon, doeth good like a medicine, no profession is more called on to have it in their aid than medical men. They cannot bring a better recipe in supplement of their prescriptions. Bitter must be the cup that a smile will not sweeten. Men who take gloomy views, who never see the bright side, who have, as it would seem, a delight in making known the worst—fore runners of misfortune, croaking ravens of destiny—ought to be banished from the medical profession. We have known cases where great learning and skill were made of non-effect or nearly so, by a most perverse tendency to tell the worst. Sir Robert Christison, the great Scottish physician, who perhaps did more than any man of his generation to test the specific action of poisons, even on his own person and often at the risk of his life, says, in one of the letters which his sons some time ago gave to the world through the Messrs. Blackwood :—

" It is sheer nonsense to get into low spirits, and quite wrong to look to the shady instead of the sunny side of the future. I was long ago prone to that error myself, but I was lucky enough to discover the mistake, and you have no idea how life improves under the opposite habit—health too, I should think, and longevity—nay, probably even wealth, conformably with one's greater vigour and determination. The real truth is, this earth is a much snugger and more agreeable residence than a certain class of poets and moralists pretend."

Thus it is plainly our interest as well as our duty, under all the circumstances of life, to cultivate Cheerfulness ; for we may be sure that the sunshine with which we gladden others' lives will be reflected upon our own with a twofold power and benediction.

## SECRETS.

## THE STORY OF A DAISY CHAIN.

## I.

OUR outlook certainly was not bright. We had been married only six weeks when one of my two pupils decided to give up reading for the law, and go to Manitoba ; and I had not the remotest prospect of a brief. Of course, my wife, Dorothy, had nothing : indeed, that was my reason for inducing her to marry me with so little consideration for the future. She had been living with a clerical aunt and uncle, who were themselves so poor that Dorothy slaved all day long to supply the deficiencies of governess, nurse and cook ; and I was sanguine enough to infect her with the belief that I was likely, in a short time, to distinguish myself at the Bar.

But when we were actually married, I began to find that money did not "come in" as I had vaguely expected ; and when young Briggs sent me a note one morning to say that he had made up his mind that he was not meant for a lawyer, I felt sick at heart. Dorothy must be told ; and that was very hard. I tried not to show how despondent I felt, but Dorothy's sympathetic eyes were too much for me, and I said sorrowfully :

"I meant your life to be smoother, and now I have only brought fresh hardships on you, my darling !"

"Oh, nonsense !" said my wife with her brightest smile. "We are a long way from hardship yet, you extravagant boy. Of course if you are sorry you married me, that is a different matter. But since you can't help yourself now, you might have the grace to say nothing about it."

"You may laugh if you can," I answered gloomily, "but what are we to do ? We can't pay our rent out of Thompson's fees if we are to spend any money at all on dinners. But I shouldn't care if it weren't for you."

"And I shouldn't care if it weren't for *you*," said Dorothy. "Can't we think of something, though ? Surely there are hundreds of ways of making money, if one only knew how to set about it. And you can do so many things. Have you ever thought of lecturing ?" she continued, after a minute's hard thought. "Don't you remember how successful Percy Beaufort-Jones was last year ? Only, to be sure, he read his own poems ; and," went on my wife, who was often pleased to indulge in a little satire, and who always spoke at such times in her softest and sweetest tones—"you would have to let your hair grow long and wild, and I must teach you to glare—like this !" And she tried to scowl at me from under her brown curls before she broke into a merry laugh.

"Yes," I said ; "and I should have to learn to be a most consummate ass all round. I think you had better find some occupation more suitable for Mrs. Hardcastle's husband, my dear."

"Well, let me think again," she said, shutting her eyes and rocking herself gently to and fro. "You might write a novel. That must be an easy way of earning money, I should think. Only don't make it religious, Gerald : I think that is quite wrong. And don't make it philanthropic—that is overdone just now. And don't bring in any wild adventures or any people that go off in smoke. Those books are so dreadfully dull. And whatever you do, don't put *any* crimes into it. I couldn't touch the money if you earned it by one of those horrible things on the bookstalls."

"I'm not likely to try," I said, persisting in melancholy. "I never could tell a story in my life ; and publishers are not so confiding as to press funds upon an unknown author. No : I must look out for more pupils. There's nothing else to be done."

Secretly a thought had occurred to me, but it was too desperate to share with Dolly until I had tried to carry it out. When I was at Cambridge I had often contributed stray verses to the *Review*, and these had been much admired by my friends. Since my college days I had written others, which I had never shown to anyone. They were all addressed to Dolly ; and when I wrote them I had intended giving them to her some day ; but a few words which she had dropped with reference to a very similar collection, which had fallen into her hands, caused me to consign my effusions to an unsought drawer. Dolly's words, "He read his own poems," brought mine vividly before me ; and I wondered if I could do anything with them.

As soon as my wife had left the room, I took them out and read them over. They were not so bad as I had feared ; indeed, some of them I read with a faint glow of pride. Could I dispose of them with any hope of remuneration ? And could I write others as good upon other themes ?

I determined to try ; Dolly would be proud of my performance when she saw it in print, and even if she laughed at my poems, I could laugh too, and show her the cheque they had brought me. But I was not novice enough to believe that the first step on the ladder of literary fame was easy of access. One of my college friends was sub-editor of a London daily paper, and I thought that he was likely to know if I had any chance of success. I often saw him, and I knew that he would do me a good turn if he could, so I made up my mind to ask his advice. I felt ridiculously young and shy as I walked to his office, and when I went upstairs and knocked at his door I was as nervous as I ever felt in my life. When Baynes looked up from his table, he leaned back in his chair and said : "Why, Hardcastle, what's the matter ? You didn't see a ghost on the way up, did you ?"

I began to think I would keep my poems till another day. Baynes

looked heartlessly prosperous and busy, and all my pride rose at the thought of his cool criticism of my work. I talked aimlessly for a few minutes and then rose to go.

"By the way, I hear young Briggs is leaving the country," said Baynes. "Won't that be a loss for you?"

"Oh, I daresay I shall survive it," I returned in a tone which I tried to make as light and careless as I could. "I never thought much of him; he is a dull fellow. No, I don't think he's much of a loss."

"I meant from a money point of view," said Baynes, watching me too curiously as I thought.

"Oh, bother the money!" I answered grandly. "Briggs isn't my only pupil. But I must be off; come and see us soon, old fellow. Good-bye."

So I went, leaving Baynes to wonder what was the object of my visit. I felt angry with him, but still more angry with myself for my childish folly. I was tempted to throw my poems into the fire when I came home—but I thought of Dolly and was calmed. One effort I would make: I would send some of them to a magazine, and would abide the issue with a courageous heart. I chose out five short lyrics which were slightly connected together, and which I called "A Daisy Chain;" these I copied out carefully and sent to the *British Artists' Magazine*, a new and very popular illustrated monthly. Of course I wrote a short note to the editor, in which I pointed out that these verses were eminently suitable for illustration. In the note I gave my own name and address; the poems I signed H. G.

## II.

A FORTNIGHT passed away. I succeeded in getting another pupil, so that for the present we were relieved from anxiety; but I dreaded a repetition of our late scare, and I was anxious to render it impossible. I had tried to write another poem, but I found that ideas were wanting, and I persuaded myself that I had better wait and see how "A Daisy Chain" fared before embarking in any fresh poetical enterprise. Why fortune should have suddenly favoured me, I know not; but one day, to my intense gratification, I received a kind letter from the editor of the *British Artists' Magazine*, thanking me for my contribution and enclosing a cheque for six guineas. My poems were a success. I would not for the world have changed places with Browning or with Tennyson at that moment. Their reputation was made and could never rise any higher; but there was no limit to the fame and the wealth that I would lay at Dolly's feet. I was on the point of telling her the glorious news, when I reflected that it would be more dramatic to hand her the magazine with the cheque, marking the place most interesting to her and to me: so I determined that she should know nothing about it until the poems came out. I went back to my study and overhauled the rest, resolved to write as copiously as I could and so to take the tide at its flow.

Meanwhile, Dorothy had not noticed my preoccupation, and I congratulated myself on keeping my secret so well. She still spent a good deal of her time in the service of her aunt and uncle, and I was glad that she need never be lonely when I was busy with my pupils. When she did not appear for some hours together I grumbled at the clerical family, but she always laughed and said she must have plenty to do.

It was November when I sent my "Daisy Chain" to the *British Artist*, and December and January passed without showing me my poems in print. At last I determined not to look out for the magazine again, and of course the February number was the one I ought to have seen on its first appearance. It was three or four days old when I saw upon the cover: "A Daisy Chain, by H. G., illustrated by J. Gilbert Leighton, Jun." I joyously bought a copy and took it home to our flat. But no Dorothy came to meet me as I opened our door: only our little maid appeared to tell me that her mistress had been hastily summoned to St. John's Vicarage, Canonbury, for Master James had had an accident on his bicycle and had "cut his head awful." I was too happy to care much for the temporary disappointment, and I knew too well the propensity of Master James for getting into scrapes to be much overcome by the news. A little later on a note came to tell me that dear auntie had quite given way, and that Dolly must stay with her for the night, but that she would be home as early as possible on the morrow.

Postponing the pleasure of sharing my pleasure with Dolly, I went to bed and dreamed whole volumes of poetry. I awoke with a delightful sense of bliss, present and future, and Dolly's sweet face, all aglow with pride and happiness, was constantly before my eyes as I dressed. Sitting down to my solitary breakfast-table, I opened my newspaper and propped it up before me as in the old bachelor days. There was a political leader of some length which I skimmed conscientiously, and next came an article on Magazine Poetry. This looked more interesting. I buttered a piece of toast and began to read more carefully.

Judge of my surprise, nay, my horror, when I discovered that "A Daisy Chain" was the principal victim of the ruthless barbarian who penned that article. It was written in the style of Macaulay on Robert Montgomery; only amid the volleys of censure and of ridicule there was now and then heard a gentle tone of mockery that was maddening to a sensitive mind—whole lines of my poems were compared with lines from Tennyson and Swinburne and other authors whom I knew only by name; and it was insinuated that I had plagiarised all round. Even Shakespeare was trotted out, as if a man could be responsible in the nineteenth century for what Shakespeare had said in the days of Queen Elizabeth. The article began with that threadbare story of the young officer who went to see "Hamlet," and who remarked that the play seemed full of quotations.

Then followed some nonsense about an almanac. I had written one group of verses about lovers parting on a June evening ; and I had said that "the blue blaze of the hunter's sword" "flashed in the moonless summer heaven." It had never occurred to me to ask whether Orion was visible in England at that particular season. And surely Mr. Besant has introduced a much greater blunder into one of his books, where he makes the new moon rise at three o'clock in the morning. No one thinks the worse of Mr. Besant for this astronomical slip ; but my critic laughed mercilessly at my ignorance, and something about lighted brandy round a Christmas pudding—the point of which I have never yet seen—rounded off the paragraph.

Two or three other poems were held up to scorn along with mine, but I cared nought for my fellow-sufferers. I was only too glad that I had not seen the magazine when it first came out, as I should certainly have shown it to Dorothy, and I had an instinctive feeling that if there was so much in my verses that deserved ridicule, she would be sure to find it out.

After I had spent a couple of hours over my coaching, I returned to the dining-room, where my wife always sat in the mornings when she was at home. She had returned from the vicarage, and she came to meet me with cheeks as glowing and eyes as bright as I had pictured to myself before the blow fell on me. The injured cousin was going on well : auntie was now quite composed, and Dolly was very glad to be at home again.

"And now, my own Gerald, I want to tell you something," she said, laying her little hand on mine in an appealing way. " You know we always said we would never have secrets between us—and I expect you to tell me everything you do and plan. But—" "

("Good Heavens!" thought I, "how has she found me out?")

"But," went on my wife, with a curious tremor in her voice, "we must have secrets no longer. See, my husband!"

As she spoke she took up that wretched newspaper, and held it behind her back.

"I asked Mr. Baynes to look at some things I wrote just to amuse myself years ago when I was a girl" (Dorothy was not quite twenty-one), "and to tell me if I could ever hope to get anything published. He took them away and read them, and he has given me an engagement to write one literary article a week in the *Daily Leader*. And—oh Gerald!—they pay me *so* well. And Mr. Baynes said I might choose the first subject myself, so I began with some miserable poems I had just seen in the *British Artist*. I couldn't bear to tell you till it was printed, for I could hardly believe they would take it after all. But here it is, and you will forgive me, won't you?"

I stooped and kissed my wife's forehead, but I could not say a word.

"You don't mind not being told before—do you?"

"No," I said, "but I might perhaps not have written those poems

and I certainly should not have published them, if I had known how you would treat them," and I tried to smile. My wife started back in horror.

"*You, Gerald? You?*" was all she could say. Then, with her bright laugh—"Oh, you are only joking. How unkind of you!"

"I'm not joking," I said calmly, drawing her back to me. "I wrote 'A Daisy Chain,' and a good many other poems two years ago when I first saw you; and when young Briggs went off and we wanted money so badly, I sent it to the *British Artist*. But I am glad, my darling, that your literary venture is likely to succeed, only I don't want my wife to work for her living."

I went on talking because I felt my small Dorothy trembling all over. Her face was hidden in her hands. I put my arms round her and tried to soothe the violent distress I saw she could not control.

"It will be a grand joke, some day, when we are rich and great," I said. "But what a good thing no one need know. You mustn't tell, and of course I won't. What shall we do with the money? I think we might get those new glasses for your uncle at once, and take them to him this evening." I made this suggestion thinking it the most comforting I could devise, but Dorothy only started up and flung herself at my feet, crying :

"Oh, Gerald, don't forgive me like that! I can't bear it."

She gave me one look that was quite tragic in its despair, and then bent her head again, hiding her face and sobbing as if her heart would break.

"My own darling," I said, raising her again and placing her on my knee, "I cannot bear to see you suffer like this. I am not hurt in the least, and you were perfectly right in all that you said. The poems *were* great rubbish and I deserved all I got. Won't you believe me when I tell you I am perfectly happy about them? If you would not take it to heart I shouldn't care a fig."

I went on for nearly half-an-hour, trying all my arts to make her look up and smile. She said nothing but "Oh, how could I do it?" and "Don't be kind to me. I can't forgive myself," till I felt desperate, and heartily wished the *Daily Leader* and the *British Artist* at the bottom of the sea. At last I induced her to lie down upon the sofa, for she was quite exhausted with her repentance.

"My poor little Dolly," I said, stroking her hair away from her throbbing temples; "you should not let things trouble you so intensely. I am the real culprit, and you don't give me any room for repentance, though I need it worse than you. Now let me read you asleep till lunch time."

"Will you read whatever I like?"

"Of course I will; only choose something not too exciting."

"I want to hear those other poems. You *ought* to have shown them to me before." Dorothy's voice again trembled, and I hastened to say: "You shall have them, every one. my dearest. They are in

the study. But I won't begin till you are as tranquil as I am. You don't know how moving they may be."

So I read, sitting by Dorothy's sofa and holding her hand in mine. At first I carefully avoided showing any feeling in my voice, but as I went on I seemed to go back to the days when my love for Dorothy had come into my life with a strange new power that mastered me and made me her "servant" as truly as Valentine was Silvia's. I forgot myself, and thought only of the hopes and fears that had inspired my verses.

When I came to the end of my manuscript I looked at Dorothy. I had succeeded admirably. She was fast asleep.

### III.

THAT very evening Baynes called. Dorothy and I had been sitting over the fire, talking seriously but not anxiously about our future. On one point Dorothy seemed to have made up her mind; she would never write another article for the *Daily Leader*.

"No, Gerald, don't laugh. I couldn't go on with that dreadful paper," she said, with a shudder that appealed most successfully to my compassion. I was not at all sorry that she should abandon the *Leader*, for though I was willing to let my wife do anything in the world that pleased her, I could not bring myself to like the notion of allowing her to work for money.

When Baynes was announced Dorothy rose with an unusually frigid air, and I was forced to put on an equally unusual cordiality in order to keep the hospitable balance. He seemed puzzled at first, but reassured by my friendliness he accepted a cup of coffee and said:

"The chief is delighted with your article, Mrs. Hardcastle. He hopes you will fall on the American mags. some day. Their poetry is mostly execrable. I can send you shoals of back numbers if you like."

"You are very kind," said Dorothy coldly, "but I feel quite unable to go on with those articles. I am sorry to have given you so much trouble."

"Not go on?" and Baynes looked from Dorothy to me with astonishment and alarm. "Why, my dear Mrs. Hardcastle, we have put you on the staff—you have promised us your pen. And your first has been a most absolute success. Why, I met Reeves as I was coming here to-night—the editor of the *British Artist* you know—and he is delighted. He says he will get you to write on newspaper leaders for him. I thought he would have been in a rage about H. G., but he says H. G.'s poems will be all the fashion after this. He wanted me to divulge your name but of course I was firm—so you see you cannot honourably desert us now."

Dorothy sat looking outwardly unmoved, but I could see that it was hard for her to keep control of herself, so I said:

"It's my permission you ought to ask if you want my wife to write

I don't approve of such independence, and I must take time to consider whether I will allow it."

Baynes again looked at us both as if he thought we were a little crazy. I laughed and said to Dorothy " You see what difficulties you get into when you neglect to consult your husband, my dear. But I think you are bound in honour to go on with the *Leader* just now. Try the effect of a eulogium next week, and then you can go back and scalp the Americans with a will."

" Do you really think I am bound ? " said Dolly, with rising colour.

" Yes, dear ; I really do."

" Then," said Dolly, turning to Baynes, " I will go on if you wish ; but I must ask an additional favour. Will you give me an introduction to Mr. Reeves ? "

" With pleasure," answered Baynes, with an air of relief. " Reeves is a good fellow, only rather worldly. He thinks a great deal of what pays and very little of what you call the higher uses of literature. And yet the *British Artist* poses as the pioneer of fresh thought and original work. Reeves is a clever man."

" I don't wish him to know my name," said Dolly.

" Very well. I can manage it if you send me your MS.," returned the obliging Baynes, who, I could see, greatly admired my wife.

Need I say what followed ? In the next issue of the *British Artist* was a tremendous article upon newspaper articles. The writer openly flung down the gauntlet to the *Daily Leader*, and challenged the literary taste of that worthy organ for attempting to throw any imputation upon the genius of H. G. " An almanac, a dictionary of quotations, and a pen dipped in gall are the furniture of our critics in these days," said my champion ; " but poets must still be equipped with sympathy, with imagination, with power of language ; and, possessed of these, the author of ' A Daisy Chain ' may well be content." I did not see this rejoinder till it was in print, but even if I had seen it I could not have prevented my Dorothy from publishing it. Indeed, I was glad to find that as soon as she had made amends after this fashion she ceased to feel so keenly her unfortunate attack upon me.

No, I never wrote any more poems. Soon after that I got my first brief, and fortune has been kind to us ever since. Dorothy ceased to write for the press when our first son came to claim all her time and thought, and though she often talks of putting into print some of the stories she is continually inventing for our four little people, she has never yet been able to begin. Baynes was inconsolable when she gave up the *Leader*, and Mr. Reeves wrote once to me asking me for some more verses, but I " declined with thanks," and for once in his life the great man must have felt like a doctor who is compelled to swallow his own physic.

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M. L. GOW.

R. TAYLOR.

SO MARGARET SET TO WORK ON THE RUINED WATER-MILL, WHILE MR. PLOCK LOUNGED AT HER FEET, ASKING NO GREATER HAPPINESS THAN TO BE NEAR HER.